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**Sexual Intermediacy and Temporality in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-
Century Literature and Culture**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. Ideas and passages reproduced from other sources have been properly acknowledged. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Jana Funke

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Abstract

It is often acknowledged that the sexually intermediate body destabilises sexual dimorphisms, but, so far, little attention has been paid to the way sexual intermediacy relates to normative figurations of time. Focusing mainly on literary and cultural discourses from late Romanticism to Modernism, the thesis examines how constructions of sexual intermediacy have contributed and responded to shifting concerns with temporality. It also investigates the relationship between literature and science through a comparative engagement with evolutionary, psychoanalytic and sexological discourses. The individual chapters deal with the conflicted temporality of the substantiated androgyne; the haunted and uncanny materiality of the hermaphroditic body in late nineteenth-century science and literature; sexual intermediacy and the prescriptive linear narrative of the case history; the sexual, temporal and national crises of World War I; and sexual travels in time and space. Overall, the thesis illustrates that sex and time are intimately related and shows that the changing understanding of sexual intermediacy opens up a powerful critique of sexual and temporal structures.

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Introduction

Sexual Intermediacy and Temporality

Androgynous statues, hermaphrodites, masculine women, female invert, wounded male soldiers, girls who wish to be boys ... In addition to combining masculine and feminine attributes to varying degrees, I propose that the members of this eclectic group all have a perverse relation to time. Through an examination of literary and scientific representations of these sexually intermediate figures, my thesis considers the intersections of gender, sexuality and time. Thinking about sexual intermediacy in terms of time cannot only expose how temporality is used in a bid to govern and produce sexual experiences and subject positions, but it can also allow us to reflect on the different ways in which temporality itself is often gendered.

Sexual Intermediacy

The different texts discussed in this thesis attest to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century obsession with sexual intermediacy. In this historical context, the principle of sexual intermediacy was drawn upon to account for different phenomena ranging from hermaphroditism to homosexuality. Indeed, the histories of hermaphroditism and homosexuality overlap to a great degree not least because homosexuality was read as a sign of gender inversion and was therefore figured as a form of psychic hermaphroditism, a “hermaphroditism of the soul”, as Foucault states (*History* 43). Rather than accept a straightforward split between body and soul, we can discern continued efforts to project sexual dissidence onto the body, so that sexual perversion came to define every aspect of the homosexual’s being: “Nothing that went into his [sic] total composition was unaffected by his sexuality” (Foucault, *History* 43).

The heightened interest in sexual intermediacy in the nineteenth- and early twentieth century needs to be seen as a result of increased efforts to map sexual difference onto the body. It is now common knowledge that nineteenth-century

scientists sought a material basis for what were perceived as fundamental differences between the two sexes.¹ The desire to elicit the “truth of sex”, as Foucault calls it, through complex discursive operations inevitably resulted in a growing awareness of phenomena that problematised rather than affirmed sexual binaries (*History* 57). Hermaphroditism and inversion were just two examples of the discursive ‘excess’ produced by the desire to reaffirm sexual difference at all cost.

To deal with the variety of sexual variations science had brought into view, German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld developed his model of *Sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, which can literally be translated as ‘sexual intermediate steps’, to describe a continuum of almost limitless sexual possibilities.² He believed that “[t]he number of actual and imaginable sexual varieties is almost unending; in each person there is a different mixture of manly and womanly substances” (*Transvestites* 228). The ‘intermediate type’ took on a bewildering variety of meanings. From the point of view of the present, it is customary to differentiate between gender (forms of behaviour and identification), physical sex (chromosomal, hormonal, anatomical sexual traits), and sexuality (sexual object choice). Many writers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century anticipated these differences, but the lines were often blurred. Hirschfeld’s concept of sexual intermediacy, for instance, could describe a variety of subjects that would nowadays be defined along the lines of homosexuality, transsexuality, transgender and intersex.

In the English context, socialist and activist Edward Carpenter spoke of ‘sexual intermediates’, for instance, in *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men* (1908).³ Loosely drawing on the principle of sexual

¹ Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* is among the most influential text in the discussion of nineteenth-century sexual science. Since then, a rich body of research has explored how modern sexual categories were produced in the nineteenth century. Laqueur and Schiebinger, for instance, comment on the inscription of sexual dimorphism in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries. Historians of sexuality like Weeks have discussed how the homosexual emerged out of this obsession with sexual knowledge (especially 96-121).

² Sexology emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as a distinct area of study interested in using scientific methodology to describe human sexual behaviour and instinct. Bloch coined the term ‘*Sexualwissenschaften*’ in 1906, but following common practice, I am using the term to refer to a variety of medical and psychological discourses on gender and sexuality throughout the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century (cf. Crozier, “Introduction” n.1).

³ Carpenter was not, strictly speaking, a sexologist as he lacked medical or scientific training. Rowbotham maintains that he drew on authoritative works by sexologists like Ellis strategically to substantiate his own libratory arguments even though he “remained suspicious of the positioning of the ‘invert’ as a specimen to be examined by the expert” (208).

intermediacy developed by German philosopher Otto Weininger in his 1903 study of *Sex and Character*, first published in English in 1906, Carpenter explained that “the sexes do not or should not normally form two groups hopelessly isolated in habit and feeling from each other, but ... they rather represent the two poles of *one* group ... there are great numbers in the middle region” (17; his emphasis). Closely related to these discussions of sexual intermediacy was the concept of sexual inversion, which Carpenter cites, and which was most influentially developed by Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds. The term sexual inversion is more specifically related to discourses of homosexuality, but gender inversion and physical signs of sexual dissidence were never entirely eliminated. Female inverts in particular continued to be described in terms of gender variance and physical difference, that is to say, in terms of masculinity.⁴

My thesis is not concerned with identifying a true referent of sexual intermediacy or any related term. Rather, I use the term to describe a range of dissident identifications, embodiments and experiences that combine masculine and feminine attributes in varying ways. In contrast to sexual inversion, I hope that the term sexual intermediacy is less closely associated with a history of homosexuality – and male homosexuality – in particular. I also use the term to draw attention to the fact that sexual dissidence tended to be constructed on the dual levels of physical appearance and psycho-behavioural interiority. This important point can easily be obscured when reading inversion as homosexuality from the point of view of the present. In contrast to other rivalling terms such as the third sex, sexual intermediacy is useful, as it does not hold out the promise that we can transcend definitions of masculinity and femininity. Rather, it reminds us that we need to remain alert to the fact that sexual positions and experiences are articulated *between*, and not *outside of* the binaries of masculinity and femininity.

⁴ Doan points out that “the language for what was clinically defined as ‘female sexual inversion’ was still fluid and imprecise” at the beginning of the twentieth century (*Sapphism* n.196). Following her example, I use terms such as ‘female inversion’, ‘female homosexuality’, ‘lesbianism’ or ‘Sapphism’ interchangeably.

Temporalising the Present

Sexual intermediacy first evokes spatial metaphors. As we have seen, Carpenter speaks of a ‘middle ground’ and Hirschfeld draws on the image of a continuum or spectrum of sexuality opened up between the two poles of masculinity and femininity. But as my thesis demonstrates, different articulations of sexual intermediacy are also thoroughly imbued in discourses of time. In order to develop this point, I turn to recent efforts in the field of queer theory to think about dissident sexualities in terms of time.

Queer theory examines sexual phenomena that, for different reasons, defy the terms of cultural legibility. The heterosexual matrix, as Judith Butler has called it, for instance, prescribes not only heterosexuality, but also insists on sexual dimorphism without which the classification of heterosexuality and homosexuality would be unthinkable. If, as Butler maintains, subject formation is dependent on subjection to “a discourse we never choose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency”, this raises the question of how the non-normative can lay claim to recognition and possibility, a question that lies at the heart of the queer project itself (*Psychic 2*).

Butler’s work from *Gender Trouble* (1989) to *Undoing Gender* (2004) shows an increasingly positive emphasis on the subversive potential of the “excluded sites [that] come to bound the ‘human’ as its constitutive outside [and can] ... haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation” (*Bodies 8*).⁵ In *Undoing Gender*, Butler stresses the potential of a ‘becoming possible’ of previously unthinkable forms of human life and maintains that “norms do not exercise a final or fatalistic control, at least, not always” (15). Thus, “when the unreal lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place” (27-28). Here, queer comes to be defined as the *not-yet*; it is that which is not yet possible, not yet

⁵ Butler’s reading of the memoirs of Herculine Barbin in *Gender Trouble* is far bleaker (119-135). Butler highlights that the emergence of those bodies that fail to abide by the law of compulsive heteronormativity is simultaneous with their abjection to the constitutive outside of discourse, an outside produced and controlled by heteronormative law itself. If and when the abjected body emerges from the realm of the impossible, it can only become ‘un/real’ by virtue of having been stamped with the mark of a failed appropriation of gender, which leads back into abjection, defeat, desubstantiation and death.

thinkable or legible. In other words, queer comes to be defined in terms of a present of disavowal, and a future of possibility.

Just how queer theory should imagine this future has been the subject of much debate in recent years. For queer theorists like David Halperin queer “describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance” (62). Butler also adheres to the idea of the potentiality of queer that, as Annamarie Jagose explains, “is a way of pointing ahead without knowing for certain what to point at” (*Queer* 131). More recently, in *No Future*, Lee Edelman has taken issue with the futurity underwriting much of queer theory and has claimed that queer subjects should embrace the negativity of abjection and make do with a present that might never renew itself. Judith Halberstam, on the other hand, offers the suggestion of a “stretched-out adolescence” as a means of preserving the possibilities of the moment before rushing forward toward a future (*Queer* 153).⁶

What these recent efforts to think about queer sexualities in terms of time have in common is the understanding that the constitutive outside of discourse that *is* queer is always determined by conceptions of the present and its relation to other moments in time.⁷ This focus allows us to think beyond the binaries of possibility and impossibility, presence and absence or visibility and invisibility, and to recognise that all of these terms are already inflected by different historically specific uses of time. To illustrate this point, we can turn to Jagose’s recent study of lesbianism, *Inconsequence*. Jagose explicitly pitches her project as an attempt to go beyond Terry Castle’s influential study of the lesbian in terms of spectrality. Jagose maintains that discussing the lesbian in terms of invisibility is self-defeating as “it brings into representation the very thing that, this figuration claims, remains outside the visual field” (*Inconsequence* 2). Instead, Jagose suggests inquiring into “the structuring mechanisms of lesbian invisibility” (*Inconsequence* 2). If the lesbian is not in the here and now, where and when is she? Through an engagement with psychoanalytic and sexological discourse, Jagose answers this question by stating that the lesbian is not simply absent, but derivative and belated, a point I return to in

⁶ For alternative recent readings of queer futurity see Muñoz and Snediker.

⁷ Freeman’s introduction to the *GLQ* special edition on queer temporalities offers an excellent introduction to the emerging field of research.

chapter four. What we can learn from Jagose's approach is that it is important to look at the historically specific ways in which sexual identities are narrated and constructed in terms of time.

Anachronism

Jagose's reading of the lesbian shows that it is important to articulate historically specific answers to the question of where or, rather, when queer is if it is not in the present. Butler is right in asserting that discourse regulates the disavowed outside it constitutes, but so far, the role of time in the regulation of this outside has not been discussed in sufficient detail. In this context, anachronism emerges as an important concept. Following Valerie Rohy, I use the term to refer to a variety of temporal 'misplacements' such as arrestment, regression, the primitive, belatedness and anticipation (xiv). Queer theory itself contributes to the construction of queer as anachronistic by deferring it into a future or past of possibility. Moreover, hegemonic discourse itself draws on anachronism to maintain and control dissident sexualities.

To understand the logic underwriting this move, we can turn to Johannes Fabian's discussion of time in anthropology. According to Fabian, the discipline of anthropology is founded on a contradictory desire. On the one hand, the anthropologist seeks to know another culture intimately and thus to encounter it in the here and now. On the other hand, however, anthropology "construes the Other in terms of distance, spatial and temporal", thus delegating it to a there and then and excluding it from the here and now of the dominant culture (xi). This means that the present maintains itself not just through a separation from the past and future, but also from a radical disavowal of the possibility of other 'presents'. What anthropology cannot do, Fabian affirms, is accept coevalness, the simultaneity of presents, the recognition that 'we' are, in fact, in the same time as 'them' (37). The result is an "allochronic" or "schizochronic" experience of time in which a difference between 'now' and 'then' is asserted through the imposition of temporal difference (Fabian 37). As Elizabeth Freeman has argued and Jagose's discussion of the lesbian has shown, queer subjects, like 'other' cultures, are also often presented as "temporally backwards" (Freeman, "Introduction" 162). The overlap between the

studies of other cultures and other sexualities is not coincidental. Anthropology fed into the emergence of sexology and psychoanalysis and all three disciplines were informed by evolutionary discourse.⁸ In all of these disciplines, primitivism emerged as an important means of managing otherness through time.

Anachronism also operates on the level of subject formation itself. Butler's concept of performativity was always based on temporality: sex is (like) gender because both are not naturally given, but constituted via repeated acts of reinforcement and reiteration over time. In fact, the very idea of a 'queer future' is only possible because sexual subjection is presented as processual (rather than static) and thus holds out the promise of productive moments of mis-citation or re-interpellation. This temporal dimension of Butlerian performativity invites further thought. For a start, Butler has the tendency to underplay the detailed logics of timing, which determine how the course of sexual development is shaped and perceived. My thesis investigates how culturally determined models of sexual development come to influence the process of sexual subjection over time. I also examine how these models are reappropriated in different ways and in specific historical moments and national contexts. Moreover, Butler's early model of performativity tends to reduce temporality to a nondescript series of repeated moments of citation that are always radically new and show no indebtedness to the past.⁹ In this context, Freeman encourages us to think about what she calls 'temporal drag'. Drag, here, is not primarily a form of cross-gendered identification, but used to describe "retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past upon the present" ("Packing" 728). Temporal drag can be used to describe anachronistic intergenerational relationships such as the one articulated by Halberstam, who identifies as a stone butch and explains that she is "always surprised to hear that apparently there are no stone butches anymore" (Dinshaw et al. 190). But temporal drag can also be employed to consider the way in which the past weighs upon the

⁸ My thesis does not develop the racist implications of the connection between primitivism and sexual dissidence. This point has been discussed by theorists like Somerville and, most recently, Rohy.

⁹ According to Freeman, Butler's early model of performativity leaves no room for the temporal 'pull' of the past. It presents "[r]epetitions with any backwards-looking force ... [as] merely 'citational'" and reduces them to fantasies of an original and authoritative subject position that is, in reality, supplementary ("Packing" 728). This model favours radical newness and disavows continuity. However, Freeman also maintains that Butler herself turned towards a model of psychic power in which more productive relationships between present and past become possible ("Packing" 729).

present in the course of individual development. We can think, for instance, of post-operative transsexual bodies, which, according to Sandy Stone, fail to achieve the invisibility often desired by the transsexual subject because of the “(inter-)textual violence inscribed in the transsexual body” (230). The technically altered transsexual body that does not ‘pass’ is an anachronism in that it carries traces from a past that is seemingly incompatible with the present. Similarly, Butler draws attention to the surgical intervention that is supposed to constitute the normality of the intersexed body. Rather than producing ‘normal’ bodies, however, Butler suspects that “these bodies, precisely because they are ‘inconceivable’, [are] subjected to medical machinery that marks them for life” (*Undoing* 64). Here, the scars of surgical intervention act as physical reminders that the body is not a ‘blank slate’ in each successive moment of interpellation, but should rather be viewed as an intertext or palimpsest that continues to carry the traces of the past into the present. In this reading, the gender constituted in the present moment is not radically new, but constructed anachronistically, that is to say, through an engagement with the past.

Queer and Straight Time

In recent years, the idea that the queer subject uses or experiences time non-normatively has been subsumed under the umbrella term of queer temporality. What queer time is can best be answered by defining it against straight time. Tom Boellstorff was the first critic to use the term straight time in the context of a discussion on gay marriage. Boellstorff defines straight time as a “linear, millenarian framework of apocalypse ... shaped by linked discourses of heteronormativity, capitalism, modernity, and apocalypse” (228). Similarly, Rohy defines straight time as “regular, linear, and unidirectional” (xiv). Both Boellstorff and Rohy maintain that straight time does not have to be heterosexual. Conversely, queer theory itself, with its emphasis on futurity, can often participate in straight time. However, what straight time and heterosexual time share is, in Rohy’s words, “the cult of reproductive futurism, served systematically to devalue queer subjects” (xiv). Some of the key terms that occur in these accounts of straight time are: *linearity* (past, present and future are arranged on a straight line); *sequentiality* (the succession of

moments is governed by a specific logic that gives it meaning); *progression* (time develops moment by moment, but also brings about improvement that sets the present apart from the past); *teleology* (time flows in a certain direction and towards a certain goal); *reproductivity* (the present is meaningful if and only if it contributes to the production of a future either through biological or economic renewal). While I do not explicitly draw on the queer/straight time binary in my thesis, my discussion of hegemonic time lines that emerge out of a range of discourses such as evolution theory, sexology or psychoanalysis contributes to an understanding of the articulation and operation of straight time.

The idea underlying critiques of straight time is to show that alternative uses of time are possible and that straight time has been naturalised much in the same way gender has come to be seen as a natural truth as opposed to a cultural construct (Freeman, "Introduction" 160). As part of this project, emphasis has been placed on queer relations to time that subvert straight time. Halberstam, for example, investigates "the [queer] potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" (*Queer* 2). My thesis is indebted to Halberstam's foundational work on queer temporality, but my emphasis lies less on a subversion or even rejection of straight time. Rather, I seek to illustrate that modern hegemonic figurations of time contain within themselves ruptures that allow for the emergence of non-normative sexual experiences or subject positions that problematise gendered binaries.

Gendering Time and Modernity

What has recently been discussed as 'straight time' shares similarities with the 'masculine time' feminist critics have been speaking of for years. In her important essay on "Women's Time", Julia Kristeva has argued that women have come to be associated with a time of "*repetition* and *eternity* ... which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits" (16; her emphasis). If masculine time is linear and possibly straight, women's time is not queer; rather, women's time fails to qualify as time at all. It is subsumed under space,

for instance, in constructions of “the *chora*, matrix space”, which is prehistoric in that it comes *before* time and temporal consciousness (16; her emphasis).

Rita Felski has drawn attention to the implications of the gendering of time with regard to woman’s role in modernity. One of the defining features of modernity is a changed relationship to time that results from the experience of mobility, acceleration, discontinuity and fragmentation. Katy Deepwell maintains that a “redefinition of space and time” is among the central characteristics of modernity (6). Similarly, Marshal Berman defines modernity as “a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women” (15). In her reading of Berman, Felski highlights that modernity does not automatically extend to ‘men and women’. Rather, Felski maintains, Berman himself favours a male subject that is “active, newly autonomous, and self-defining” (2).¹⁰ Women, on the other hand, come to represent the conservative and traditional element that lies *outside* of a modern project. Women could offer a “maternal home ... for those fleeing the chaos and instability of the modern world” (Felski 41). If women did engage with the complex temporalities of modernity, they were often deemed unfit to cope with these experiences and “were seen as subject to specifically feminine frailties in the face of the modern world” (Betterton 24).

If this implies that women have no role in modernity, it is important to note that modernity itself is characterised by an obsession with the prehistoric or primitive. Jürgen Habermas comments on this paradox of modernity when he points out that “[t]he new value placed on the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism, discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present” (5). This stable present can, as Habermas explains, be produced through a turn towards “the barbaric, the wild and the primitive”, which is, as we have seen, often viewed as feminine (5). If a prehistoric femininity enables the masculine time of modernity, it seems that the time of modernity itself is sexually intermediate rather than masculine. This also implies that women’s alleged failure to partake in the time of modernity needs to be rethought.

¹⁰ Here and in the following, I use ‘modernity’ to define the state of historical and social connections that constitutes the variously dated modern age. I use ‘modernism’ to speak about the literary and cultural moment that arises within the context of modernity in the early twentieth century.

It is not the aim of my thesis to affirm a feminine or masculine experience of modern time. Rather, I hope to illustrate that the complexities of modern time reinforce gendered binaries while also contributing to their undoing. Sexual intermediacy, I propose, always produces a fraught relationship with the hegemonic time lines articulated in overlapping discourses of evolution, psychoanalysis and sexology. It is for this reason that sexual intermediacy is key to an understanding of the gendered times of modernity.

The Uses of Time

Based on the discussion of time I have presented so far, it is possible to argue that my thesis does not deal with time at all. To be sure, my definition of straight time thoroughly spatialises time by presenting it as a series of moments that are aligned one after the other on a straight line. And even the uses of queer time I have outlined do not remedy the situation: moving, jumping or travelling backward and forward in time, delaying or stretching the moment, or simply remaining stuck somewhere along the line does not, ultimately, allow us to go beyond spatial understandings of time. Following Elizabeth Grosz, we can attribute this problem to Western philosophy, which “tends to submerge time in representations of matter and space, to spatialize and visualize temporal movement” in terms of space (5-6). Grosz and other proponents of Spinozan and Deleuzian philosophy have attempted to think of time outside of the restraints of space, to think time itself.¹¹ The focus here lies on ontological time, a time of becoming, newness and potentiality, fuelled by what Rosi Braidotti calls “ontological desire, the desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be” (22). Spatial time, it is assumed, is still determined by epistemology: it is mapped, restrained and ordered in a way that ontological time with its emphasis on radical newness is not. In the work of critics like Grosz, ontological time serves to step away from a Butlerian constructionism and to investigate “how the biological induces the cultural rather than inhibits it, how biological complexity impels the complications and variability of culture itself” (4).

¹¹ See Tuhkanen for an overview of the critical debate in which Braidotti and Grosz are most commonly featured as antagonists of Butler’s work.

I have no claim in the attempt to sidestep epistemological constructions of time and therefore embrace the spatialisation of time that underwrites my thesis. The reason for this is that I do not see how ontological time can make room for the fact that time operates by means of exclusion and negativity and is governmental and disciplinary both in the repressive and generative sense. In her recent essays on war, recognition and grief, Butler addresses the significance of time in cultural and sexual politics:

That there is no one time, that the question of what time this is, already divides us, has to do with which histories have turned out to be formative, how they intersect – or fail to intersect – with other histories, and so with a question of how temporality is organized along spatial lines. (*War* 101)

Following Butler, we can see how spatialised time allows us to think about the different ways in which hegemonic power continues to operate in rivalling constructions of time.

At this point, time begins to sound a lot like discourse, which raises the question of what the turn to time actually has to offer methodologically. In other words: if time does not do away with the restrictions of discourse, why use time at all? I hope that my thesis will provide a variety of answers to this question, but for a start, I would like to suggest that time is relevant not because it allows us to step away from discursive restraints, but because it is at once more intimate and more impersonal than discourse. Time evokes the carnal, the physical and the sexual in a way that discourse does not. Time is intimately “felt on, with, or as a body” and it is this intuitive experience of time that connects it every so closely with the sexual (Freeman, “Introduction” 159). But time is also even more abstract and impersonal than discourse. It makes true the emphasis on involution that Butler emphasises when she claims that agency does not precede, but is constituted by discourse. One of the most common misreadings of performativity is the assumption that the subject ‘picks out’ a gender role just as he or she would a piece of clothing. Surely, we are not as likely to make the same mistake when talking about time. This means that time can help to further problematise essentialised identity categories by drawing attention to the way in which these positions become available through the timing of subjection in the first place.

With regard to my project, this approach is useful as I am not primarily concerned with identity categories. As I pointed out earlier, I do not seek to identify a single referent of sexual intermediacy and am more interested in the way in which different temporal constructions of gender and sexuality intersect. When looking at the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, this approach is necessitated by the fact that identity categories were not as clearly defined as they are today. Foucault's argument that sexual acts were translated into recognisable identities through the operation of sexual science tends to gloss over the fact that the transition from sexual behaviour to sexual type was a slow and complex process, especially when dealing with female homosexuality as I do in the last two chapters of this thesis. Thinking about gender and sexuality in terms of time rather than identity can help to do justice to the turn of the century as a specific historical moment in which the sexual identity categories we know today were only emerging and were not yet fully formed.

This is not to say, however, that my project is radically opposed to identity formation. Halberstam warns against uncritically dismissing all forms of identity politics and shows that time can help to reveal how individuals or communities "make 'room' [and 'time'] for themselves, by piecing together a story of emergence" (*Queer* 20). Following Halberstam's example, the last three chapters of my thesis are explicitly concerned with the way in which non-normative subject positions can be created and expressed within hegemonic timelines. According to Berman, it is precisely this attempt to create a home in the "maelstrom" of modern life that characterises modernity itself (345). Joanne Winning maintains that it is the modern "tending toward dissolution ... that exactly creates the space in which *new* formations of [dissident] identity and experience may be wrested and lived out" ("City" 19; her emphasis).

Sexual Intermediacy in Science and Literature

In order to address the questions outlined above, my thesis draws on texts from a variety of disciplinary contexts. For a start, reading evolutionary, sexological and psychoanalytic figurations of sexual intermediacy with and, at times, as literature can help to reveal how narrative operates in the formation of sexual categories. As Rohy

points out, literary analysis draws attention to “the artificial temporality of narrative form [and] alerts us to the fictional dimension” of time lines that might otherwise be assumed to be ‘natural’ or ‘obvious’ (xiv).

While my focus lies on English literature, I also draw on scientific and literary writings from France and Germany. The reason I cut across these boundaries lies in the nature of the subject matter of my thesis. The mobility of sexual intermediacy as a concept can be demonstrated by looking briefly at the cross-national and interdisciplinary reception history of Théophile Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), which I discuss in the first chapter. Even though the novel was written in a bid to reveal the playful and inconsequential quality of sexual categories, sexologists like Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing mention the text in *Sexual Inversion* and *Psychopathia Sexualis* respectively. Both Ellis and Krafft-Ebing reference the novel together with other examples of mainly French literary texts to prove that female inversion was a common phenomenon.¹² The sexological reading of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* indicates how closely the discourses of literature and sexology are intertwined. Rather than viewing the novel as a text about the elusiveness of sex, it comes to be seen as a case study of the lesbian subject. Krafft-Ebing finds it “interesting that the heroines of these [lesbian] novels appear in the character and role of the husband of a lover of the same sex, and that their love is extremely passionate” (n.230). In this reading, Madeleine’s alleged masculinity is derived from the active role she plays in her relationship with Rosalind. Ellis, who credits Gautier with “remarkable insight” into the subject of female inversion, explains that the novel deals with “the adventures of a woman, who was predisposed to homosexuality and slowly realises the fact” (1st ed. n.160). *Mademoiselle de Maupin* makes another telling appearance in the history of female homosexuality decades after Krafft-Ebing and Ellis had first published their studies. During the American obscenity trial of John Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928 and 1929, Hall’s attorney, Morris Ernst, successfully defended the book on the ground that *Mademoiselle de Maupin* was allegedly far more explicit in its treatment

¹² What is ironic about these lesbian readings is that, as Castle points out, lesbian sex remains apparitional in the novel (*Apparitional* 34-36). Rosette never does have sex with Mademoiselle de Maupin. Their first sexual encounter is interrupted before Rosette can uncover Theodore’s sex. At the end, their sexual encounter is not described and it is Theodore that leaves the room having removed his female clothing.

of lesbianism and therefore more obscene than *The Well*. If Gautier's work could be circulated freely, then the same should apply to Hall's novel (Taylor 251). The reception history of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* exemplifies the productive exchange of sexual knowledge between the scientific and literary realms, as well as between national contexts, which motivates the interdisciplinary and cross-national scope of my project.¹³

Structure of the Thesis

My thesis does not attempt to articulate an overarching summation of temporal and sexual relations in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. Rather, it seeks to point to the intersections between the temporal and the sexual by examining specific cultural and historical moments that give rise to different expressions of sexual intermediacy.

Focusing on the nineteenth century, the first two chapters introduce the relation between sexual intermediacy and temporality by focusing on the impossible presence of the substantiated androgyne and the hermaphroditic body respectively. The first chapter deals with literary representations of the substantiated androgyne from Romanticism to Aestheticism. I show that writers like Honoré de Balzac, Gautier, and Charles Algernon Swinburne sought to project androgyny onto a material level in order to comment on the relation between the sexual, the temporal and the material. In this context, the impossible presence of the substantiated androgyne was gendered and eroticised. Over the course of the nineteenth century, materialist explanations gained in significance and cut off the material world from a realm of transcendental meaningfulness that continued to operate in discourses on the substantiated androgyne. As a result, the hermaphrodite emerged as haunting figure, threatening to corrupt a present stage of development supposedly characterised by complete sexual dimorphism. Darwin and Freud both defer the hermaphrodite to the primordial or primitive past, but at the same time develop understandings of temporality that allow the hermaphrodite to haunt the present. Thomas Hardy and Oskar Panizza draw on the figure of the haunting hermaphrodite

¹³ See H. Bauer for a sustained discussion of the exchange of sexual knowledge between Germany and England.

to problematise the distinction between past and present, the primitive and the progressive, and the irrational and rational.

Towards the end of the century, the sexually intermediate body ceased to be discussed in terms of haunting and was increasingly recognised as a problematic, but nevertheless real, human possibility. Sexologists began to acknowledge the variability of sexual categories and, in turn, presented elaborate narratives of sexual development. Even though it was acknowledged that sexual characteristics were not necessarily singular or stable, individuals of uncertain sexual identity were nevertheless required to adopt and narrate a permanent and continuous sexual identity. A close analysis of autobiographical case histories reveals the different narrative strategies employed to meet this demand. The memoirs of Karl M.[artha] Baer in particular expose the strategies involved in the narrative construction of a seemingly stable masculine self and expose the gendered implications of temporal consciousness at the turn of the century.

The fourth and fifth chapters extend the interest in narratives of sexual development and the emergence of sexually intermediate experiences and identities, but shift the focus to expressions of female masculinity and lesbian desire. Thus, they contribute to understandings of Sapphic modernity, “the social forces and cultural conditions that made the connection between sexuality and modernity imaginable and representable”, and literary Sapphic modernism, the textual strategies involved in the articulation of dissident sexual identities and experiences (Doan and Garrity 7). The fourth chapter examines the temporal, sexual and national crises of the Great War. I argue that the war produced an anachronistic experience of time and sexuality shared by the masculine woman and the male soldier. I develop this point through a reading of D.H. Lawrence and Hall’s engagement with the war as a moment of crisis and possibility. The fifth chapter turns to questions of mobility and shows that travelling – as metaphor and as reality – came to be associated with the possibility of sexual transformation and lesbian desire. Looking at the work of Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West and Bryher, we can see yet again that sexual intermediacy is opened up through a critical engagement with time.

Chapter 1

Substantiating Androgyny

I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal. (Shelley, "Letter to John Gisbourne" 976)

In one of his last letters written to his friend John Gisbourne in June 1822, Percy Bysshe Shelley reflects on the relationship between representation, desire and time. He questions whether it is ever possible to represent an eternal ideal without implicating it in the realm of 'flesh and blood'. Shelley's poem, "The Witch of Atlas", written two years earlier, addresses the same problem. The poem describes the agony of isolation felt by a female witch, who desires to escape her solipsistic state by creating a winged androgyne:

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow /
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love ...
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow –
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion. (lines 321-328)

The materialisation of the androgyne is described as a process of sculpting. There seems to be something improper, 'repugnant', about the witch's desire to substantiate the ideal and bring the androgyne to life. Indeed, the witch's androgyne is a fundamentally dissatisfying creation. If "the sexless thing" is beautiful, it is also sterile and dumb (329): "the Image lay / With folded wings and unawakened eyes; And o'er its gentle countenance did play / The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies" (361-364). The substantiated androgyne fails to come to life and the witch's attempt to bridge the gulf that separates her from the world results in a catastrophically sterile creation.

And yet, towards the end of the poem, the androgyne does open its wings and propels the witch's boat forward. The substantiated androgyne becomes the motor or

rather – given its apathetic stance – the catalyst of the imagination. If the substantiated androgyne is a failure, it nevertheless moves the witch’s boat forward in its journey through the world. In this context, two different experiences of time are introduced. The human mariners make their “course unpiloted and starless / ... to an unknown goal”, but the witch’s journey is guided by the androgyne with its “heaven-coloured pinions” (546-549; 393). The sailors’ journey has no goal; in their experience, time leads to no known destiny. The witch’s journey, on the other hand, is guided by the reflections of the stars on the hermaphrodite’s wings. If the reflection is meaningful, the journey is guided by a transcendental force and the witch’s experience of time is meaningful in that it is directed towards a specific goal. But the poem also maintains the possibility that the reflection might be a sterile image, yet another product of the witch’s solipsism, in which case this experience of time is nothing but an illusion.¹

The radical uncertainty implied here needs to be read in the more general context of changing cultural figurations of temporality. As a result of a declining religious faith in the late eighteenth century, the eschatological Judeo-Christian understanding of time had lost authority. Christian time was linear, but tended towards a specific aim ordained by a higher power. This goal was, ultimately, the apocalyptic end of all time and the achievement of eternity. Beginning in the Renaissance and culminating in Enlightenment culture, this sacred time was secularised (Fabian 2-3). The here and now of the present was no longer determined by a transcendental meaningfulness that determined the flow of time. Rather, linear time now came to be associated with progress that was entirely in human hands. While secularised time was still linear, it no longer offered the hope of a leap out of time and into eternity. Romantic writers reacted to the perceived crisis of Enlightenment thought by projecting “the traditional powers and actions of God, as well as the overall pattern of Christian history” on the individual artist and the natural world (Abrams 91). The artist was invested with the potential to establish a

¹ The poem has been read in radically different ways. Hoeveler, for instance, argues that the witch’s creation does not reference the Platonic androgyne, but the Ovidian hermaphrodite because of its sterile material presence, which represents “the disillusionment that derives from solipsism” (255). Rubin, on the other hand, reads the hermaphrodite as the fulfilment of symbolic union between world and word achieved through artistic production (219).

meaningful connection between the here and now of the present and a transcendental meaningfulness that was now found in nature.

Yet, as the quotation from Shelley's letter shows, a radical uncertainty undercut this aesthetic project: how can the artist, 'cased in flesh and blood', avoid corrupting that which is 'perhaps eternal' through his desire for representation, the desire to make present? Shelley's interest in the figure of the substantiated androgyne, the androgyne that had been made present, is indicative of a more general trend in nineteenth-century culture. The substantiated androgyne comes to embody the fall into a confusing temporality at the same time as it promises an escape from the material and the temporal. Through an engagement with this figure, writers were enabled to comment on the relationship between desire, temporality and representation in different ways.²

Romantic Androgyny

The androgyne has often been read as a figure of desire, indicating the wish of an escape from the material. The idea of an androgynous merging of masculine and feminine qualities was central to Romantic writers because poetic genius came to be associated with feminine qualities such as sensibility, sympathy or irrationality (Richardson, "Colonization" 15). The male poet's desire to become one with a feminised natural world reinforced the significance of an androgynous union. If male writers strove for the androgynous union of masculine and feminine characteristics, several critics have pointed out that, paradoxically, Romantic androgyny did not typically challenge gender binaries, but was often associated with the usurpation of the feminine element. The very unity of self and world, subject and object, was not synonymous with the merging of masculine and feminine, but

² A note on terminology: it is common to differentiate between the terms androgyne and hermaphrodite so that the first references the transcendental ideal whereas the latter describes the physical or material embodiment of this ideal (cf. Busst; Hoeveler; Weil). While this differentiation can be helpful, it is not conducive to the argument developed in this chapter, which claims that the substantiated androgyne references both the material/temporal and the ideal/eternal thus establishing a connection and allowing for a negotiation between the two spheres.

continued to depend on the transcendence of nature and, consequently, the erasure of femininity.³

This reading of Romantic androgyny as expressive of a wish of transcendence forms part of the larger debate in Romanticism scholarship that revolves around the question of how to reconcile the Romantic insistence on the immersion with nature in the here and now with the dematerialising flight away from the material and temporal sphere. In many ways, this question has become the crux of Romanticism studies ever since Jerome McGann's influential study of *The Romantic Ideology*. The gist of McGann's argument is that Romantic writers hypocritically rejected nature in favour of transcendental vision. In his influential study of Wordsworth, Geoffrey Hartman expresses this thought succinctly, when he writes that the poet "thought nature itself led him beyond nature" (33). With regard to the discourse of androgyny, this would imply that the merging of male/female, or, mind/matter resulted not in a truly dualistic, but a radically idealistic model that failed to achieve a subversive androgynous union.

While it is important to remain alert to the fact that representations of androgyny often fail to fully deconstruct the terms of sexual difference, it is also necessary to highlight that the male desire for an escape from the material and feminised world only represents one side of Romantic culture. A.J.L. Busst shows that the androgyne was a highly influential figure in Enlightenment culture, where it comes to be associated with the 'l'homme collectif' or the 'l'homme universel'. In this context, the androgyne was appropriated in order to represent a secularised linear time. It operated as "a symbol of the whole of mankind considered as an individual endowed with a single mind, pursuing its single destiny throughout all the events of universal history" (Busst 12). As many Romantic writers set out to reject precisely these ideas of abstraction, universality and reason, it is not surprising that the androgyne took on different functions in Romantic culture. Enlightenment thinkers tended to ridicule Platonic ideas of immateriality and transcendence, but a Platonic idealism that replaces material experience with abstract ideals would have been

³ As Richardson points out, the very concept of androgyny "promises a utopian image of wholeness but generally delivers still another version of the male incorporation of the feminine" ("Colonization" 19).³ Mellor's comes to a similar conclusion regarding the "bodiless" self of Romantic writers, which was constructed in a bid to overcome the implications of an androgynous union between male poet and a feminised and thus externalised nature (148).

equally unattractive for Romantic writers, albeit for different reasons. Peter Thorslev emphasises that for Romantic writers, “the great ideals exist not in any abstract realm of transcendent being, but are immanent in the progress of the individual mind and in the history of mankind” (78); the individual emerges as “timebound and historically determined” (85). Shying away from the idea of a universal and essential humanity, Romantic artists tended to understand the individual as necessarily located in the historical and physical present. Indeed, the previously held view of a transcendentalising and dematerializing Romantic idealism has been modified strongly in the last two decades.⁴ In his more recent *Poetics of Sensibility*, McGann himself substantially revises his previous view, and this change seems indicative of recent Romanticism scholarship in general. McGann now argues that Romantic literature needs to be resituated in the context of a culture of sensibility in which the physical body as the locus of sense perception is central. According to Richardson, these recent developments do not construct a ‘new’ Romanticism, but rather “open up a view of Romantic discourse as by turns dualistic *and* antidualistic” (“Romanticism” 11; his emphasis).

The texts discussed in this chapter need to be situated in the context of this contradictory discourse. Following the preoccupation with androgyny in Romantic culture, Honoré de Balzac, Théophile Gautier and Charles Algernon Swinburne explore the substantiated androgyne’s mythic promise to bridge the gulf between the transcendental and the material and, in doing so, develop different conceptions of desire, temporality and representation. Their understanding of androgyny is set apart from later figurations of the sexually intermediate body, which are the subject of the following chapters, because the substantiated androgyne continues to evoke a transcendental sphere that can confer meaning despite the androgyne’s fallen status. What connects these writers across period and national boundaries is the persistent desire to substantiate, to see, touch and be in the very literal presence of the androgyne, a desire that is not cancelled out by the awareness of the ultimate impossibility of a fully materialised androgyny.

⁴ Richardson provides a useful literature review outlining the most important publications dealing with the significance of the body in romantic culture (“Romanticism”).

Materiality, Temporality and Desire

Far from being a Romantic invention, the mythic function of the androgyne as mediator between the transcendental and material world was inherited from the Platonic tradition.⁵ The relationship between the material and immaterial realm is often thought of in spatial terms with the androgyne mediating between the transcendental ‘above’ or ‘beyond’ and the ‘here’ of grounded material experience. However, the androgyne is also associated with a shift from the eternal realm of transcendence to the ‘now’ of a material present implicated in temporal development. The relation between the two was inflected through a discourse of desire.

Aristophanes’ speech in *The Symposium* is an aetiological fable about the origins of sexual difference and desire. Central to his account is the notion of the fall, which is both a fall into materiality and temporality. While there is nothing in the speech that implies the original *immateriality* of the harmoniously united primordial androgynous couplings, Aristophanes does emphasise that the androgyne is lost to the present; it is a term without a referent, an unobtainable ideal: “Its name has survived, but the gender itself has died out” (25). The loss of the androgynous ideal is presented as a form of punishment for human hubris that led Zeus to cut the androgynous beings into male and female individuals that are helplessly struggling to recombine with their former halves. The cut is associated with the fall not only into division, but also into dependency and sexuality, which come to characterise the current state of material existence. Both the androgynous and the sexually differentiated human beings are described in physical terms. The cut does not produce material existence or sexual difference as such, but the materiality resulting from the separation is one of lack, which raises awareness of the material status of human beings and of sexual difference in the first place. While the androgynous beings are fully autonomous and highly mobile (Aristophanes compares them to “acrobats”), the divided humans are physically restricted (25). Indeed, the process of

⁵ Plato’s *Symposium* experienced a revival during the Romantic period, exerting a direct influence on Keats and Shelley, who famously translated it. Neoplatonic discourses also gained in importance. Coleridge and especially Blake, for instance, were heavily influenced by the Swedish mystic Swedenborg, whose writings combined elements of Neoplatonic and Christian thought in unorthodox ways (Hoeveler 9-10). Later writers like Balzac and Gautier continued to draw on Neoplatonic and Swedenborgian logic as did Aestheticist artists like Swinburne.

cutting as well as the wounded individuals it produces are described in strikingly material and passive terms as “sorb-apples [cut] in half” or “an egg [cut] in two with a hair” (26). When Apollo is called upon to heal them, “he smoothed out most of the wrinkles and fashioned the chest with the help of a tool like the one shoe-makers use to iron out the wrinkles in leather” (27). The human body is quite literally reduced to a *material* that can be sculpted according to the gods’ will. In the process of sculpting, the skin turns into a veil that clothes and binds the individual to a material existence associated with a lack of agency. Like Socrates, Aristophanes equates this lack not only with love, but also with the desire for somebody or something that will fill the void left by the cut and restore the primary feeling of autonomy.

The fall into materiality is associated with the fall into temporality. The androgynous beings seem not only to transcend the rules of space in that they can move in “two forward directions ... rapidly round and round ... and wheel over and over”, but they are also impervious to the threat of mortality, as it is the cut that introduces both the sensation of pain and the possibility of death by “starvation and general apathy” (25; 27). As the androgynous beings are above the spatiotemporal restrictions imposed by physical existence, the fall into materiality and sexual division produces the perception of space and time. In Aristophanes’ speech, the loss of primordial androgyny comes to represent not only the loss of wholeness, but also the loss of an existence unrestrained by time. Diotima further explains that humans are in love with immortality precisely because they lack it in their present state, which is characterised by constant change without aim. Materiality and sexual difference, which are constitutive of desire, here come to create a negative and destructive image of temporality.⁶

However, the fall into the material and into lack also produces a teleological time scheme that offers hope. The present – and by extension material existence – is

⁶ Neoplatonic discourse offers an even more negative view of time (Lloyd 49). Drawing on the distinction between ideal form and material actuality, the Neoplatonic tradition developed the idea of an undifferentiated origin of all life, which Plotinus calls the ‘One’ or the ‘Good’. Plotinus affirms that ‘procession’ or ‘emanation’ necessarily produces time as “the spreading out of life involves time” (341). In that time is associated with differentiation that finds its ultimate expression in the creation of the material sphere, which is at the furthest remove from the original One, it is opposed to the Good and comes to be associated with evil. What becomes apparent here is a highly contradictory assessment of time as associated with increasing differentiation on the one hand and a teleological movement towards wholeness on the other. Plotinus is more pessimistic than Plato (Lloyd 49). See Abrams for a more detailed discussion of Neoplatonism and Romanticism (146-154).

devalued in favour of a lost wholeness whose recovery is anticipated in a future moment of reunion. According to Aristophanes, “[l]ove ... [is] guiding us towards our complement and, for the future, holds out the ultimate assurance – that if we conduct ourselves with due reverence towards the gods, then he will restore us to our original nature, healed and blessed with perfect happiness” (30). Thus, desire, which is the result of sexual differentiation, strives to negate itself by overcoming sexual difference. Similarly, time is both the condition of the individual’s fallen state as well as the precondition of his or her escape from both the temporal and material sphere. According to George Ridenour, eternity is “not ... dualistically separate from time ... but ... thought of as both behind and in time, and as being in some sense generated out of it” (108). Practised correctly, desire leads away from the material and temporal sphere and allows for a return to original wholeness.

The *Symposium* constructs two opposing views of desire and temporality: desire can lead the individual away from the physical sphere and towards a state that is fundamentally incompatible with the divided nature of material existence. However, the possibility of a misdirected desire that insists on the material and fails to escape it continues to persist. Desire for beauty, which is Immaterial and Good, is associated with a teleological conception of time that leads towards the ascent and thus away from the temporal sphere. Material desire is associated with a more unsettling figuration of time as productive of difference without the hope of transcendence. This is precisely the dilemma Shelley articulated by turning to the figure of the substantiated androgyne, which comes to be associated with both kinds of desire and temporality.

It is important to note that these two expressions of desire and temporality came to be conflated with ideologies of gender and sexuality. The original Platonic androgynes constitute man-man, woman-woman, and woman-man couples and thus comprise homosexual and heterosexual possibilities. As Rachel Bowlby points out, the desire the split produces is heterosexual only in the sense that “the ‘hetero’-preposition has nothing to do with male and female, but simply means ‘the other of two’” (*Destinations* 193). But through a series of misreadings the androgyne came to be understood as the reconciliation of man and woman. Mediated through Neoplatonism, the Platonic androgyne was conflated with the Christian trope of the

apocalyptic (heterosexual) marriage that influenced many Romantic writers (Abrams 37-46). However, importantly, like all other forms of desire, heterosexual desire was always at risk of lapsing into the carnal instead of reaching for the transcendental.

Materialising Androgyny

In the *Symposium*, sexual and textual desire, procreation and creation, are closely intertwined. In his critique of Aristophanes' speech, Socrates turns away from the question of sexual difference. Instead, he equates love with the desire for immortality, defined as the eternal possession of goodness. This desire for immateriality and timelessness can be fulfilled in the production of physical and mental offspring: philosophical thought, virtuous deeds and artistic production. Socrates clearly privileges these 'mental children', not least because the physically non-reproductive love between men underwrites his entire speech. Socrates also privileges mental offspring, as it leads him further away from any form of carnal desire and, by implication, the material sphere. Thus, he develops a theory of artistic production that is opposed to materiality and temporality. Diotima's speech, recounted by Socrates, ends with instructions regarding the ascent of the individual "from the things of this world" to a "sight of *that* beauty ... not beauty tainted by human flesh and colouring and all that mortal rubbish, but absolute beauty, divine and constant" (55-56; his emphasis). This absolute beauty, the ultimate goal of the development of the individual mind, matches all of the characteristics of the metaphysical abstract ideals that are commonly referred to as Platonic Forms (Waterfield xxxii). Above all other things, absolute beauty is eternal and constant and clearly set apart from "the continued existence of any mortal creature [that] does not involve its remaining absolutely unchanging for all time", as Diotima reminds Socrates (51).

While the *Symposium* does not explicitly present the androgyne as an ideal in the Platonic sense, later writers like Shelley in "The Witch of Atlas" would come to treat the androgyne as an ideal. Moreover, Shelley uses the figure of the androgyne to problematise the very possibility of representation. The question is whether a meaningful connection between the ideal and the world can be maintained even if the

ideal is represented in material terms. The physical medium of sculpture allows Shelley to sharpen the contrast between the material and the ideal, but he is also making a more general statement about language in which the ideal is 'clothed' in the materiality of the signifier.

It is worth pointing to Ovid's rendition of the Hermaphroditus myth, a tale of misdirected heterosexual love that leads *ad absurdum* some of the assumptions of the Platonic model of sexual and textual desire. Hermaphroditus' universe does not offer an ideal origin that could be nostalgically remembered, as sexual difference is destabilised from the start. The self is always already fallen: Hermaphroditus is a boy yet his compounded name anticipates his transformation and his youth further underlines his undeveloped masculinity. In contrast to the Platonic myth, heterosexual love does not result in androgynous union and a leap out of materiality and temporality. Quite the contrary, in Ovid, the merging of male and female is replaced by the forced sexual encounter between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus that, according to Weil, results in "an unstable and frightening confusion from which there emerges ... a power struggle between the sexes, each trying to establish a wholeness it never had" (19). Providing a material referent for the androgyne, a term whose very meaning depends precisely on a lack thereof, Ovid's tale of Hermaphroditus does not mask or overcome, but thematises the difference between signifier and signified, word and ideal. It therefore lends itself to ironic readings in which the Platonic teleological time scheme collapses and is replaced with what Paul de Man defines as an "endless process that leads to no synthesis" (220). According to Diane Long Hoeveler, this underlying ironic awareness is characteristic of Romantic androgyny as such since writers were not oblivious to the fact that "androgyny was only an alluring siren song of escape from the body" (9). She explains that this is reflected in "a self-conscious, self-mocking tone, Romantic irony if you will, [that] creeps into the works and the androgynous [the ideal] becomes confused with the hermaphroditic [the material]" (7). Romantic irony results in the experience of solipsism as the subject realises the failure of language and therefore knows that every connection between himself and herself and the world is cut off.

The problem with purely ironic readings of androgyny is that they tend to negate the questions of materiality and temporality, which lie at the very heart of

Romantic discourse. De Man's ironic subject (for lack of a better word) knows itself to be embodied, but can only recognise this embodied self as a non-self, from which it is set apart due to the division of word and world. As a result, it cannot speak meaningfully about the material world just as it cannot address questions of time. The "truly temporal predicament" of the ironic subject de Man constructs is that it is subject to a time in which it cannot actively participate (222). Unable to reach either to the past or future, the subject is caught up in a time that flows and is yet reduced to the present (222). As de Man asserts: "irony appears as an instantaneous process that takes place rapidly, suddenly, in one single moment" (225).

However, this monistic emphasis on difference, which hails the collapse of temporal order, does not do justice to representations of the substantiated androgyne. Romantic writers actively strove to substantiate the androgyne *despite* the awareness of the corruptive impact of substantiation and the problematisation of transcendence. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for instance, describes the androgyny of great minds in strikingly physical terms: "something feminine – not *effeminate*, mind – is discoverable in the countenances of all men of genius. Look at the face of old Dampier ... How soft is the air of his countenance, how delicate the shape of his temples!" (158; his emphasis). The self-corrective gesture of rejecting the implication of 'effeminacy' points to Coleridge's awareness of the precarious argument he rehearses when trying to project androgyny onto a material reality. This awareness does not, however, motivate the wish to escape the material sphere altogether. Quite the contrary, drawing on the fundamentally non-dualist discourse of physiognomy, Coleridge seeks to construct a material image of androgyny. Not content with the deferral of androgyny *beyond* material appearances, Coleridge insists on projecting androgyny *onto* the material level and seeing it reflected in the 'countenance'. This implies that the relationship between the androgyne and physical reality is not just based on a purely negative logic of disavowal. Indeed, Coleridge's statement is symptomatic of the wish to substantiate androgyny, to give it body and to represent it.

It is important not to overlook the gendered implications of Coleridge's statement: on the one hand, he is keen to construct the man of genius as an androgynous ideal that combines masculine and feminine attributes, but on the other

hand, he seems to shy away from the very idea of femininity. This potentially threatening confusion does not, however, result in the complete retreat into an idealistic distance from the material sphere. While the wish to engage with the material world and to substantiate the androgyne persists, it does not escape gendered and sexual ideologies. This becomes even more apparent when focusing on the metaphors of veiling and sculpting, which are often used to describe the process of substantiating the androgyne.

The Veil and the Statue

In Romantic discourse, the veil does, at times, appear as a garment that needs to be stripped in a bid to transcend the material realm and to overcome the limitations of an embodied perspective. However, at other times, there is an insistence on the veil for fear of what might lie behind it. In his essay “On Life”, Shelley speculates what it must be like to overcome Humean sense perception, the “habitual sense of ... repeated combinations”, and to reach a state of perception that “strips ... the painted curtain from this scene of things” (634). The end of the third act of “Prometheus Unbound” contains such a joyous moment in which “the painted veil ... called life / ... is torn aside; / The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains / Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man” (190-194). However, as Ronald Tetreault points out, this notion of the promise “of the recovery of truth in the fullness of its presence beyond time ... [is] very much at odds with Shelley's scepticism” (17). Indeed, the highly contradictory employment of the veil trope in Shelley's poetry and prose points to a more ambivalent understanding of transcendence. This is expressed most poignantly in the “Lift Not the Painted Veil” sonnet, in which Shelley *insists* on the painted veil. Transcendence is associated not only with “Hope”, but also with “Fear” (4-5). Neither the preacher nor the poetic “Spirit that strove for truth” found knowledge when they lifted the veil, but were confronted with the “chasm, sightless and drear” (13; 6).

A similar tension is expressed in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, a text that can easily be misread as an expression of the author's idealism. Clothing or veiling operates as an analogy of the customs and rules according to which the material

world becomes available to the individual. In keeping with the idealistic tradition, the reality of the material world is reduced to a set of garments, produced by “[c]ustom ... the greatest of Weavers” (196). Carlyle’s fictitious German professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh speculates that these veils disguise an immaterial core of truth. He is particularly disgusted with spatiotemporal perception. Repeating the Kantian logic according to which spatiotemporal perception is part of the phenomenal sphere but foreign to the noumenal, time and space emerge as veils that inevitably separate the individual from a universal vision or understanding of the world. Teufelsdröckh dreams of the “universal HERE” and “Everlasting NOW” of the spiritual sphere, which he hopes to achieve by removing the garments of time and space (198).

However, as the very name Diogenes Teufelsdröckh (God-born Devil-dirt) indicates, Teufelsdröckh might strive for transcendence, but is ultimately matter-bound. This dualistic quality of the text is further enhanced by its heteroglossic quality, which also includes the empirical and commonsensical voice of the editor that satirises Teufelsdröckh’s transcendental discourse (Haney 319). Teufelsdröckh’s frustrated dream of transcendence is modified, as he learns that knowledge is processual. While the change from one guise to the next opens up the possibility of revelation, its mere replacement by another veil ultimately forecloses the insight it promises. This deferral of insight does not, however, signify the ironic collapse of all meaning, which would oppose the moral and social programme of Carlyle’s writings, as McLarren Caldwell argues (48). It indicates a productive compromise between Teufelsdröckh’s transcendental ivory tower and the editor’s uncritical grounding in material reality.

Sartor Resartus emphasises the liminality of the veil, which signifies the threshold of transcendental insight and material knowledge. Like the figure of the substantiated androgyne, it promises to mediate between both spheres. In fact, the substantiated androgyne is often conflated with the veil, as the process of veiling the androgyne allows it to become present in the first place. To veil the androgyne and thus to substantiate it is always associated with the inevitable loss that occurs when representing the ideal. The desire to lift the veil expresses the wish to restore this loss and to gain transcendental knowledge. However, to unveil the androgyne can also result in a complete collapse into the material. According to Francette Pacteau, the

androgyne “can only exist in the shadow area of the image; once unveiled, once we throw a light on it, it becomes a woman or man” (78). The androgyne is dependent on the veil, which grants the transcendental figure presence, but also guards it against a complete fall into the material.

Similar to the process of veiling, sculpting the androgyne literalises the desire to substantiate it in a bid for transcendence of the material. Busst argues that the interest in the androgyne “owes practically nothing to any biological or scientific observation” (1). Indeed, Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s admiration of Greek sculpture was based on a rejection of the ugly and diseased physical body: “Those diseases which are destructive of beauty, were ... unknown to the Greeks. There is not the least hint of the small-pox, in the writings of their physicians; ... Venereal plagues, and their daughter the English malady had not yet names” (63). Winckelmann concludes that “the bodies of Greeks, as well as the works of their artists, were framed with more unity of system, a nobler harmony of parts, and a completeness of the whole, above our lean tensions and hollow wrinkles” (66). In the androgyne, Winckelmann sees the “ideal of beauty ... an aesthetic construction, self-consciously artificial” and thus far removed from physical reality (MacLeod 29).⁷ However, the assumption that sculpture offers an escape from the realities of the present is flawed, because it fails to take into account the role of the observer as an individual irreducibly located in time and space. Winckelmann himself was keenly aware that engaging with sculpture involves subjecting an immobile object to the individual gaze, which implicates it in a temporality that is foreign to it (MacLeod 29-46). His own discussion of the difference between the sick body and the perfection of Greek sculpture lapses into a strikingly material rhetoric of disease that shows the failed attempt to overcome the physical body. Moreover, Winckelmann’s writings on androgynous sculpture reveal a strong homoerotic undercurrent, which influenced writers like Walter Pater as we shall see.

In his study, *The Dream of the Moving Statue*, Kenneth Gross has explored the complex relationship between observer and statue. According to Gross, “the statue presents a body or a pose arrested in time, arresting time itself; it marks an absence or a loss through the presence of a thing that is yet irremediably, materially

⁷ See MacLeod for a detailed discussion of Winckelmann’s androgynous ideal and the role of the androgyne in German Romanticism in general (25-90).

present” (2). The statue is both a material object and a timeless ideal; it is present and absent. The dream of the moving statue indicates the desire to reconcile these opposites. What is at stake is the restoration of a lost connection, the reconciliation between the ideal and the material. This reconciliation underwrites the very medium of sculpture, but is ultimately belied by the statue’s immobility, the fact that it does not completely offer itself to the temporality of the living. Impelling the statue to come to life, the observer involves it in a corruptive temporality that is foreign to it: “if it [the dream of the living statue] suggests a redemptive gift, the restoration of a dead sign to use and relation, it may also suggest a kind of theft of life, as if something already autonomous was forced to yield to the demands of a life not proper to it” (Gross 9). If many writers draw on the language of sculpture to write about the substantiated androgyne, it is because the androgynous figure embodies the same temporal dilemma. Holding out the promise of a leap out of time and materiality, this dream is thwarted by the individual’s groundedness in time as well as his or her desire, which threaten to corrupt the ideal.

The wish to turn cold stone into living flesh, to touch, feel and possess the resisting statue is erotically charged. The dream of the moving statue is a dream of submission and seduction. Gross implies that the forceful activity of the observer is associated with masculinity, while the seductive passivity of the statue is equated with femininity. Moreover, he views the wish to make the statue blush as part of “a deeper fantasy of a wished-for male power to *cause* blushes, to force the exposure of desire” (80; his emphasis). The gendered and misogynist relation between a feminised sculpture and a masculinised observer does not only reflect general cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity, but can also be traced back to the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. In Ovid’s rendition, Pygmalion sculpts the ideal woman, because he feels repulsed by real women, who “spend / Their days in wickedness” (x.240-241). He is “horrified / At all the countless vices nature gives / To womankind” (x.241-242). Pygmalion is able to assert his superiority not only by rejecting women, but also by compelling the ideal woman to come to life due to the strength of his desire. The relation between observer and statue can be figured in terms of the phallogentric gaze. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray has shown through her critical reading of Freudian psychoanalysis that phallogentrism is

based on sight: male desire is, above all other things, the desire to see. The phallogentric gaze focuses on the absence of the phallus in woman and thus misreads the female body. Defined through castration or lack, woman has “[n]o being and no truth” of her own, but is defined entirely through the phallogentric gaze, which posits itself as omnipotent (48; her emphasis). Pygmalion is ‘horried’ by the women that constitute their own being, that are ‘real’ in that they differ from his ideal of femininity. In the statue, he constructs the ‘ideal’ woman that submits to his gaze and comes to life precisely because she is a product of the phallogentric gaze. Toril Moi makes more explicit the implied power dynamics of activity and passivity when she explains that the phallogentric gaze “enacts the voyeur’s desire for sadistic power, in which the object of the gaze is cast as its passive, masochistic, feminine victim” (*Sexual* n.192-193). The dream of the living statue sustains the phallogentric gaze, which seeks affirmation of its omnipotence in its own reflection. Its equivalent is the penetrative male gaze that seeks to strip away the veil to uncover an underlying truth only to misread what it sees.

The erotics of the statue and the veil repeat the contradictory conception of desire discussed earlier. On the one hand, the male gaze desires to possess the ideal in a bid of transcendence, but on the other hand, this very desire causes the collapse of the ideal into the material and the temporal. This inevitable fall unsettles the agency of the male subject. The tale of seduction is also a tale of inevitable rejection and erotic failure. The statue does not come to life and therefore fails to yield to the possessive male gaze. Even if the dream of the living statue is fulfilled, it results in a confusion of the very terms of activity and passivity, movement and stasis, and by extension male and female that constitute the male gaze in the first place. Similarly, the uncovering of the veil often fails to reveal the desired truth, but exposes yet another veil that frustrates male desire at the same time as it sustains it.

The statue of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in the Louvre in Paris and the Villa Borghese in Rome, which had a strong impact on all of the writers discussed in this chapter, reinforces this contradictory dynamic of desire. The sleeping figure is lying on a thin blanket whose numerous folds contrast the smoothness of the naked skin. The sleeper seems to have involuntarily removed the blanket that now only covers the ankles and parts of the arms while the rest of the body lies exposed. The unveiled

body does not offer a singular truth, but rather produces further conflict and contradiction. Indeed, it is the lifted veil that bares the statue's incongruous sexual characteristics, its female breasts and male genitals, and thus forces the spectator to move physically around it in order to perceive the contradiction that is presented. As a result, it is the observer – and not the statue – that is animated. Indeed, the very passivity of the statue, which is emphasised by the fact that s/he is sleeping, is countered by the activity and movement of the observer who can only attempt to grasp it successively. Thus, paradoxically, it is the lifted veil that forecloses understanding and confronts the spectator with an image that insists on temporalisation, but remains static itself. As the observer moves around the statue, he or she can only understand it processually, spinning veil after veil of meaning, but never uncovering a final truth that would finally reconcile the ideal with the material: the statue does not come to life, but nevertheless impels the observer to animate it.

The desire to animate the statue finds its expression in ekphrasis, the literary description of the statue. In ekphrastic narrative, the phallocentric gaze expresses itself in writing. The observer's temporality is imposed in the form of ekphrastic writing which, in Gross's words, seeks to embed the statue in "a mythic, historical, or anecdotal narrative ... [and] describes otherwise invisible pasts and futures" (142). It is through ekphrasis that the observer seeks to bridge the gulf between himself and the statue and to involve the statue in the temporality of narrative that is foreign to it.

Sarrasine and Seraphita

In his much-discussed short story *Sarrasine*, published in 1830, Balzac rewrites the Pygmalion myth to expose the problematics of the phallocentric gaze and artistic representation. Sarrasine leads a solipsistic existence and is purely dedicated to the art of sculpture. This apparently changes when he first sees the opera singer La Zambinella on stage in Rome. His love for Zambinella inspires Sarrasine to turn away from art and towards life. However, it soon emerges that Sarrasine has misread his own desire: he does not fall in love with Zambinella, but his ideal of femininity, which is embodied in the sculpture he creates. He loves Zambinella as "a masterpiece", as "Pygmalion's statue" (25). In contrast to Galatea, however, the

‘woman’ Sarrasine impels to come to life shatters the dream of a reconciliation of art and reality: Zambinella is not the woman of Sarrasine’s dreams, but a male castrato, neither male nor female. Zambinella’s femininity is exposed as a disguise that obscures yet another layer of artifice, the man-made body of the castrato. Sarrasine’s desire for a reconciliation of the real and the ideal is thwarted as he remains caught up in a play of artificial veils that are not reliably grounded in material reality. Zambinella takes the position of the fallen androgyne that can exist only as an ideal. To Sarrasine, s/he appears as a “creature for which there is no name in human language, a form without substance, a being without life” (13).

Roland Barthes has famously examined this breakdown of language in *S/Z*. Focusing on the absent referent of the female body, which is replaced by the unsignifiable androgyne, Barthes reads *Sarrasine* as symptomatic of the collapse of realist language, which depends on a referentiality that is here denied. Just as Sarrasine fails to penetrate Zambinella’s disguise, Barthes argues that, as Sandy Petrey summarises, the text “makes it impossible to assume that realist prose actually allows readers to see through it to a world beyond” (57). Balzac juxtaposes the timeless medium of sculpture with the temporality of ekphrastic narrative, which is here presented as a form of possession and violence. Sarrasine cannot content himself *listening* to Zambinella’s voice or *looking* (rather than gazing) at the statue, but has to *speak* to her. Addressing the statue and thus corrupting it through language, Sarrasine seeks to possess the ideal in the material and temporal world he inhabits: “He could see Zambinella, he talked to her, begged her, spent a thousand years of life and happiness with her, putting her in all imaginable situations, rehearsing, so to speak, the future with her” (27). Ironically, of course, neither the statue of Zambinella nor Zambinella himself/herself can offer this experience to Sarrasine as they remain unsignifiable and therefore outside of the temporality of Sarrasine’s narrative.

Sarrasine does not offer an answer to the question of whether a different form of seeing and writing is possible. In *Seraphita*, published five years after *Sarrasine*, Balzac returns to this problem. Part of the *Livre Mystique*, *Seraphita* appears as an anomaly in Balzac’s corpus, because of its supposed idealism. Gwendolyn Bays points out that it was because of works like *Seraphita* that

contemporaries of Balzac, like Philarète Chasles and Charles Baudelaire, realised “that this ‘realist’ had actually been the most Romantic of them all” (83). Gautier reacted favourably to the novel, stating that Balzac has “never come nearer, never will ... be nearer ideal beauty than in this book” (quoted in Weil 80). However, the novel can also be understood as a more complex response to the implied failure of language in *Sarrasine* and as a re-reading of the phallogentric gaze.

Seraphita/Seraphitus has an “undivided, integral soul” that only appears to be male or female because of his/her fallen material state (195). S/he is struggling to free herself/himself from any remaining traces of the “prison of bone and flesh” and transcends the divisions of earthly existence including those of sexual difference (34). Seraphita/Seraphitus is ‘out of place’ in the material world and strives upwards to be delivered of her/his body. S/he is also ‘out of time’ as his/her soul has already overcome the temporal divisions that characterise the material present. Seraphita/Seraphitus, who is described as “white and calm as ... a marble statue” has access to a superior kind of insight (12). Like sculptors, “the princes of art”, Seraphita/Seraphitus explains that s/he carries inside herself “a mirror in which moral nature is reflected with all its causes and effects”; by virtue of this mirror, s/he “can read the past and the future by thus looking into the conscience” (79). Balzac called this kind of insight ‘specialism’ (from the Latin *species* for ‘mirror’). According to Bays, specialism is “as an interior vision whereby the seer (*voyant*) is able to perceive, as if in a mirror, a given situation in its entirety, that is in its past, present and future aspects” (85). As the substantiated androgyne, Seraphita/Seraphitus is located in the present moment, but s/he is also capable of transcending temporal restrictions.

Like a number of other writers before him, Balzac is drawing on the writings of the Swedish Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg in presenting this form of androgynous vision.⁸ Swedenborg conflated the Platonic leap out of time and materiality with the Christian concept of the ascension to heaven in which the physical and time-bound body is stripped away.⁹ He maintained that some

⁸ Swedenborg’s writings were highly influential amongst Romantic artists. Blake in particular showed a keen interest in Swedenborg. Coleridge later famously elevated Swedenborg to the androgynous ideal, stating that it is the Swedish mystic who illustrates that “a great mind must be androgynous” (190-191).

⁹ Neoplatonism and Christianity are also opposed, most noticeably because of the replacement of

individuals, including himself, were capable of seeing with both the physical and the spiritual eye, thus mediating between the transcendental and the material sphere. This dual vision, which opened up the possibility of correspondences between the ideal and the real, came to be associated with androgyny. In *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugal Love*, for instance, Swedenborg describes a heavenly couple, which appears as a man and woman on earth, but is united in one body in heaven (46-48). In Seraphita/Seraphitus' description of specialism, the gendered logic underwriting androgynous vision becomes apparent: it combines the feminine detachment from the present moment with penetrative masculine reason.

Wilfred and Minna, the human couple that has fallen in love with Seraphita/Seraphitus, represent these two difference stances (Weil 94). They cannot transcend the material sphere of sexual difference and continue to perceive Seraphita/Seraphitus according to heterosexual logic: Seraphita/Seraphitus appears as masculine when near Minna and as feminine when in the company of Wilfred. Seraphita/Seraphitus does not yield to her lovers' desire and remains a "motionless statue", inspiring a love "without hope, but not without curiosity" (82). Wilfred, who strives for scientific knowledge, is bewildered by Seraphita/Seraphitus' presence, which supersedes empiricist understanding. Seraphita/Seraphitus' transcendental vision appears to him as a "monstrous science which strips all human things of the properties they derive from time, space, form" (29). Caught in the realm of phenomenology, a discourse based on pure reason is inaccessible to Wilfred and he perceives Seraphita/Seraphitus' face as "unendurably dazzling" (41). Like Sarrasine, Wilfred is deprived of a referential language that signifies the world meaningfully. Unlike Sarrasine, the artist, who is caught in the realm of artifice, however, Wilfred is lost in a natural world emptied of any deeper meaning or overarching direction, a world that leaves no room for the knowing male subject. Reading his mind, Seraphita/Seraphitus exclaims that, for Wilfred, nature "is ignorant, degenerate, does evil, makes mistakes, destroys itself, disappears, and begins again"; s/he asks "what purpose can we ascribe to the world?" (100-103).

Plotinus' anonymous 'One' with a personal Christian god. In addition, Abrams states that the circular conception of an endless movement away from original wholeness followed by a processual return to the original source is replaced by "the Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, with ... its plot, which occurs in time and only once for all time" (151; his emphasis). "[T]he eternal circulation becomes a single circle" in Neoplatonised Christianity (152).

In contrast to *Sarrasine*, Wilfred resists the desire to force Seraphita/Seraphitus into life. He realises that the words he is using to describe Seraphita/Seraphitus fail to comprehend her/him and accepts that it is impossible to bridge the gulf between the real and the ideal, to penetrate the veil and to possess the statue. Unlike *Sarrasine*, Wilfred learns to desire from afar. In doing so, he proves that he is capable of detaching himself from the present moment, which is the first step towards androgynous vision for the male subject. Wilfred does not share Seraphita/Seraphitus' transcendental insight, but he is capable of anticipating it. It is because of this act of faith in a future moment of reconciliation that Wilfred continues to be able to use language productively, to try and comprehend "nature in the limits of speech", as he says, even though he is aware of the uncertainty of knowledge and signification in the present moment (39). The structure of the novel reflects this teleological conception of time. At the end of the narrative, Seraphita/Seraphitus ascends to heaven and grants Wilfred and Minna a moment of vision in which they feel "the certainty of the action of worlds and beings, and a knowledge of the effort with which they all tend to a final result" (151). Wilfred's leap into faith is rewarded with a moment of insight that confers meaning to an otherwise bewilderingly complex world.

To be sure, the vision does not last and Wilfred and Minna are left behind, even more "conscious of the burthen of their bodies, which hindered them from complete and unclouded intuition" (149). While *Seraphita* holds out the promise of a meaningful experience of time and a functioning language that reconciles word and idea, it is also a novel about the failure of meaning.¹⁰ Balzac himself admits defeat in his dedication to Madame de Hanska when he apologises for "the most imperfect outline of the figure" of Madame de Hanska's dreams (xvii). However, *Seraphita*, unlike *Sarrasine*, does not promote the breakdown of language. As we have seen, Wilfred continues to use language in order to make sense of the world even though he is aware of the fact that the present moment does not offer any certainties. Balzac here promotes what Janis McLaren Caldwell has described as the "double vision" of an early form of Romantic materialism, which "tolerates disjunctions due to the desire to explain provisionally in the face of incomplete knowledge, not in

¹⁰ See Weil for a discussion of the failure of language in *Seraphita* (92-99)

celebration of resolution” (4). Instead of an ironic disconnect between word and world, language here continues to allow the subject to engage meaningfully with the world even though there is an understanding that all meaning in the present is necessarily imperfect.

While Balzac seeks to critique the possessive phallogentric gaze by promoting an erotics of detachment, he fails to challenge the terms of sexual difference (Weil 94-96). This is especially apparent in the lack of attention paid to the only prominent female character, Minna, who remains a passive spectator. The contradiction between her strong desire for Seraphitus and her alleged detachment is not explored further. In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier presents a similar critique of the phallogentric gaze, but also shows interest in a more subversive reading of female desire.

Mademoiselle de Maupin

Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is often viewed as one of the founding documents of Aestheticist thought. Gautier presents the key principles of *l’art pour l’art*, insisting on a strict separation between the work of art and the artist, and art and reality. In the sense that the Romantic cult of nature is replaced by the cult of the artificial, it appears that Romanticism and Aestheticism are opposed. Yet, just as the engagement with nature in Romanticism was also expressive of a wish to transcend the material realm, Aestheticism’s valorisation of the artificial is not expressed in a complete disregard of the material. Quite the contrary, Gautier explicitly compares the artist and the naturalist in the preface arguing that the former “has discovered as many species of animals” as the latter and “promises to create new pleasures and to develop the organs and the senses” (27). Here, the artistic imagination is presented not as a means of escape, but as a form of engagement with a material world freed from the constraints of conventional perception. The desire for an experience of beauty that is not just abstract, but immediate and sensual, is expressed in the continued fascination with the substantiated androgyne.

Chevalier d’Albert’s letters, which constitute the first half of the novel, express his extreme solipsism. His ideal of happiness is a “large square building with

no windows looking out” (180). He describes himself as his “own prisoner” and admits that he has “not succeeded in making the idea of another person enter ... [his] brain” (87). The only desire he feels is for “a castle of chimeras” filled with “everything that goes beyond the bounds of normality” (45; 53). He is tormented by the fact that the world he finds himself in does not coincide with the world of poetry and, like Plato, he wishes to expel the poets whose “ambrosia has made our wormwood so much more bitter” (61). In keeping with Platonic logic, he locates himself in “a pale world peopled by ghosts, real or unreal shades murmuring confusedly” (85). He can only derive pleasure from his lover Rosette when he conflates her with the artificial images of ideal beauty and confesses to betraying her, “but only with pictures and statues” (96). As the material world is a source of constant disappointment for d’Albert, he explains that his ideal love is the love for a statue:

Because you are totally uninvolved you don’t have to worry that you will be surfeited or disgusted when you have made your conquest; and you cannot reasonably expect an extraordinary thing like the story of Pygmalion to occur more than once. I have always liked the impossible. (126)

In contrast to Pygmalion, D’Albert does not desire the living statue, but is attracted to its very immobility, the fact that it transcends the here and now of material existence and remains unobtainable. D’Albert compares Theodore to the statue of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, which produces the most “pleasing state of uncertainty”, uncertainty regarding Theodore’s ambiguous sex and d’Albert’s own sexuality (182). Unlike Sarrasine, d’Albert does not wish to betray the statue by forcing it into a life that reinforces sexual difference and thus erases this pleasurable uncertainty.

However, d’Albert’s erotic needs change over the course of the novel. It becomes more and more apparent that d’Albert is not drawn to Theodore’s sexual ambivalence, but feels compelled to reiterate his femininity by asserting that “there is more of Salmacis in him than in the Hermaphrodite of the *Metamorphoses*” (182). Instead of shadows and ghosts, d’Albert suddenly feels drawn to a material world that was previously distasteful to him: “I only understand now what I touch with my hands. My dreams are of stone. ... Matter presses in upon me, invades and crushes me” (179). His newfound material desire also implicates him in a temporality that he sought to escape when he could only love sculptures. Commenting on his solipsistic

desire for the immaterial and immobile, d'Albert exclaims: "with ideas like these I can remain neither of this time nor of this world. One cannot subsist in this fashion alongside time and space. I must find another way" (181).

D'Albert's material desire is seemingly satisfied at the end of the novel, when he has sex with Rosalind. For Patricia Duncker, the fact that sexual union does take place appears "unusual" given that the text was commissioned to be written as a Romantic novel, generally characterised by longing for the spatially and temporally absent (xxv). Instead of reading the novel's complex ending as a turn away from a Romantic model, it is more appropriate to argue that the confusion of presence and absence and real and ideal expresses a dualism that has characterised Romantic discourse all along. Like *Sarrasine* and *Seraphita*, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* ends with a striptease, as the sexually ambivalent hero/ine takes off the garments that disguise her body. In contrast to Balzac's castrato, who reveals a body that defies categorisation, and his seraph who is stripped from the veil of the flesh, Madeleine reveals that she is a woman. Gautier draws on the trope of the statue and the veil to dramatise the lapse from the aesthetic to the material and temporal:

The shift, happy to follow the example of the gown, did not stay in place very long. It slid first off the shoulders without anyone thinking to prevent it. ... Then Rosalind, seeing how untrustworthy her remaining garment was, lifted her knee to prevent it from falling right off. In that position she looked exactly like those statues of goddesses with those clever marble draperies ... But since the shift was not made of marble and its folds were not holding it up, it continued its triumphant descent ... So there she remained with nothing to hide her, in all her diaphanous, glorious nakedness, with her garments lying all around her forming a sort of pediment. (329-330)

The passage is closely modelled on Ovid's rendition of the Pygmalion myth. Like Galatea, whose flesh changes from "ivory hardness" to warm wax shaped by the sculptor's hands, Maupin turns from a "white apparition" into a "warm" female body possessed by d'Albert (x.283; 329-331). Madeleine appears first as a statue, a "spectacle" in which, for once, "the reality exceeded his [d'Albert's] dreams" (330). Then, however, as "the painter was satisfied, the lover took over" (331). Emphasising the shift from aesthetic to material desire, the novel reveals Gautier's conception of male desire: men are capable of aesthetic admiration and are yet doomed to a physical desire that restricts them "to the lower spheres, barring them from spiritual love" (Bordeau 97).

To a certain degree, the text itself is implicit in this possessive phallocentric gaze. In contrast to *Sarrasine* and *Seraphita*, the sexed body does not remain an absent referent. For all the emphasis on play and disguise, Lillian Faderman suggests that the novel's ending "assure[s] the reader that like all women she [Madeleine] is attainable" (266). Even Madeleine's initial desire to dress as a man is grounded in her femininity: she knows that men do not reveal their true feelings and intentions to women and wants to find out what they are really like before falling in love with one. Madeleine's masculine clothes fail to constitute her sex; Theodore remains legible as a cross-dressing, heterosexual woman. Similarly, d'Albert's homosexual attachment to Theodore, which he confesses in a letter to his friend, is revealed as heterosexual desire.

However, importantly, at the end of the novel, the material desire that underwrites this insistence on femininity and heterosexuality is presented as self-negating. The femininity d'Albert unveils ultimately disqualifies Madeleine as an object of desire. Paradoxically, it is the moment in which the statue comes to life that d'Albert's assertion that "Adonis and Hermaphroditus are dead" is confirmed, as the eternal ideal cannot survive in the flesh (285). In the letter she leaves behind, Madeleine herself emphasises that their union could only last for a single moment, as he or she would soon grow disenchanted with the other. She implies that d'Albert's initial desire for her as the unobtainable ideal was indicative of his distaste for the woman she has become. The allusions to the Ovidian rendition of the Pygmalion myth, in which the male disgust with women is emphasised, serve to underline this point. Once the female body has become available as a material referent, it has to be expelled not only from d'Albert's world, but also from a text that promotes the aesthetics of veiling and reveiling without consequence. Despite the critique of the phallocentric gaze, the text contains an unchallenged misogyny that is characteristic of much of Aestheticist thought.

Forestalling d'Albert's desire for material possession, Gautier establishes the realm of art as separate from the realm of reality. Like Madeleine, the work of art cannot be contained in the temporal and material economy of life. Thus, as in Balzac, the failure of the possessive phallocentric gaze has obvious generic implications and can be understood as a warning against the demand of objective truths that underlies

realist writing. In this sense, Gautier's insistence that "the superfluous is necessary" cannot only be read as an invitation to indulge in beauty, but also as an imperative to remain at a distance from life (23). This, however, also exposes the impotency of Gautier's own language, which separates the subject from the world and thus fails to offer "the singular and all-encompassing experience it attempts to assert" (Weil 132). It is indeed surprising that an undertone of asceticism creeps into Aestheticist discourse and belies the expectation of sensual indulgence and excess implied in the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. For a novel that culminates in sexual union, the ending is strikingly dissatisfying both for the characters and the reader. "[I]t will satisfy neither my male nor my female readers", the narrator acknowledges (333).

Madeleine disappears at the end of the novel and shows a degree of agency that is irreconcilable with the structural position of a femininity defined by complete availability in the present. Madeleine's heterosexual femininity is exposed as yet another veil that obscures an endlessly deferred essence. The uncovering of the veil fails to reveal the desired truth and exposes another veil that frustrates male desire. As in Salome's dance with the seven veils, revelation is promised with each disappearing veil but is at the same time indefinitely delayed so that the spectator is teased but never satisfied. Irigaray points out that the veiling of the female body is symptomatic of shame, but the appropriation of the veil also transfers agency from the male spectator to the female performer (115). The resulting anxieties are expressed in readings of Salome as phallic and emasculating (Showalter, *Anarchy* 149). At the end of the novel, it is the inconsequential time of aesthetics that triumphs as the teleological Romantic plot is frustrated. Heterosexual union does not result in wholeness and a leap out of time, but in lack and in consequence. D'Albert believes himself to be in possession of Maupin, but later finds out that he has not been her only and last lover. Before she disappears, Madeleine has sex with Rosalind. Leaving behind two pearls, a symbol for the clitoris, she strips off her female guise (Duncker xxviii). It is Theodore who emerges from Rosalind's bedroom and escapes into another space and time.

The fact that Madeleine changes from woman to man shows that, unlike Balzac, Gautier does not dream of transcending sexual difference. Madeleine is not sex-less, but rather describes herself as "a third, separate sex which does not yet have

a name” (318). In the following sentence, Madeleine explains her position in terms of sexual inversion: she has “the body and soul of a woman, [and] the mind and strength of a man” (318). This reveals that the ‘third sex’ indeed does not have a name of its own, as it can only be thought of in terms of sexual difference. Duncker reads the third sex spatially, arguing that it is the space Madeleine’s fluid sexuality opens up between her two lovers (xxviii). However, the third sex is also temporal in that it finds its expression in Madeleine’s changes of sex over time. Madeleine’s assertion that the third sex does ‘not yet have a name’ might imply the possibility of a future in which sexual difference has been overcome. However, it also reinforces the fact that the third sex is never fully attainable in a material present characterised by sexual difference. Gautier himself explicitly rejects a reading of the novel that insists on futurity. In the preface, he declares his desire to “write poetry and novels which lead to nothing and which contribute nothing to the advancement of a generation along the path to the future” (20). It is only if we figure the future of the third sex as a slight to the very idea of progress that Gautier might allow us to find meaning in it.

Aestheticism and the Androgynous Statue

English Aestheticist writers like Pater, Oscar Wilde or Swinburne draw on the figure of the substantiated androgyne to explore dissident sexualities and their relation to artistic production. This is readily apparent in Pater’s essay on Winckelmann, which was first published in the *Westminster Review* in 1867 and was later included in *The Renaissance*. Pater wrote the essay in 1866, the same year that Swinburne had published his explosive *Poems and Ballads, First Series*. It was the frankness of Swinburne’s poetry that inspired Pater to be more candid about his own “sexual-aesthetic ideal” (Dellamora, *Desire* 102). Pater provides ample biographical material regarding Winckelmann’s friendships with young men, which are presented within the context of his interest in Hellenism. The conflation between male-male relationships and beauty becomes apparent in a quotation from Winckelmann, which Pater reproduces early on in the essay. Winckelmann explains that the appreciation of the male – rather than female – body is indicative of a superior aesthetic instinct.

For those who can only appreciate beauty in women, “the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female” (quoted in Pater 123). Winckelmann continues: “the beauty of art demands a higher sensibility than the beauty of nature” (quoted in Pater 123). The connection between male beauty and art, and female beauty and nature is important, as it highlights the homoeroticism of Winckelmann and Pater’s conception of art. Dellamora concludes:

When nature, whether the biological urge to procreate or the social imperative to generate offspring, yields normative place to “art,” then not economy but other things such as waste become possible: for example, waste of semen in masturbation or in love between males. (*Desire* 111)

For Winckelmann and Pater, the appreciation of art comes to be associated with an emphasis on unnatural desire. This reading is partially derived from Platonic homoeroticism, but in contrast to Socrates’ asceticism, the Aestheticist ideal of beauty can only be reached through a sensual appreciation, a material desire for art. Building on Baudelaire’s model of *correspondances*, which he had developed through his reading of Swedenborg, Aesthetic writers continued to search for connections between the material and the ideal.¹¹ For many, an interest in sexual perversions, which combined the sensual and the unnatural, was integral to this search.

In Pater’s writings on Winckelmann, sculpture becomes the perfect medium for the expression of the Greek mind, in which “the ‘lordship of the soul’ is recognised”, but in which “the mind has not yet learned to boast its independence of the flesh” (132). Sculpture is a superior form of art, because it is immediate and physical, but nevertheless capable of presenting “pure form” (136). Ultimately, Pater maintains that the ‘spirituality’ of sculpture subsumes its materiality and thereby frees it from the constraints of temporality. He explains that sculpture

unveils man in the repose of his unchanging characteristics. That white light, purged from the angry blood-like stains of action and passion, reveals, not what is accidental in man, but the tranquil godship in him, as opposed to the restless accidents of life. (136-137)

The abstract whiteness of the sculpture’s surface is equated not only with timelessness, but also with a lack of physicality. Associating the discourse of the veil

¹¹ Wilkinson presents a detailed discussion of the relationship between Baudelaire and Swedenborg (217-249).

and the statue, the statue becomes a vision of man stripped from the burden of physicality and temporality.

This dream of transcendence, however, only becomes available through an appreciation of the statue as a material object, which Winckelmann himself describes in physical terms involving visual and haptic senses (MacLeod 40). Like Winckelmann, Pater emphasises the embodied nature of experience. According to David Weir, Pater's significance lies precisely in his "resistance to the metaphysical interpretation of beauty in favor of what has come to be called the phenomenological" (66). Pater reminded his readers of the literal meaning of *aesthetic* as *perception*, sense experience, which implicates the individual in the here and now of the present moment. If art can only be actualised in the individual, as Pater himself emphasised, then the statue's timelessness is at stake.

Wilde's writings on sculpture in *The Critic as Artist* focus on the role of the observer, the critic, who gives life to the statue in ekphrastic narrative. As part of his initial rejection of criticism, Ernest declares that

[i]n the best days of art there were no art-critics. The sculptor hewed from the marble block the great white-limbed Hermes that slept within it. The waxers and gilders of images gave tone and texture to the statue, and the world, when it saw it, worshipped and was dumb. (109)

Ernest presents the art of sculpture as passive since it merely brings out the form that is already latent in the material. The same passivity applies to the observer, who is reduced to a mute worshipper. Gilbert, on the other hand, argues that sculpture is at a disadvantage when compared to literature precisely because of its timelessness.

The statue is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth or change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realised by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest. (140)

Gilbert emphasises that the statue only becomes available to the observer through narrative, that is to say, through its collapse into the temporal sphere. This collapse is not associated with loss, but is seen as the prerequisite to an individual experience of beauty. The homoerotic implications of Ernest and Gilbert's conversation are

obvious: not only does Gilbert's discourse seduce Ernest, but the statue they are talking about is that of Hermes, the boy god. Wilde is here drawing on the tradition of the boy androgyne developed in Winckelmann's writings. Winckelmann adored sculptures of the pubescent boy, a figure suspended between feminine softness and masculine hardness, passivity and activity, the unconscious and the conscious (MacLeod 40-42). Gilbert's desire to bring the statue to life can thus be read as an encoded expression of male-male desire.

Importantly, however, the androgynous boy continues to occupy the structural position of the passive female, so that "[t]he desiring relationship between a male viewer and an androgynous male statue yields to a completely heterosexual model, in which the statue becomes predicated as female the viewer as male" (MacLeod 46). Gilbert's dream of the living statue glosses over the statue's resistance, the fact that it does not completely offer itself to the present moment and the phallogentric gaze. Wilde had derived the emphasis on the moment, on pure sense perception and experience, from his reading of Pater, who emphasised that beauty can only be experienced by an individual in a given moment in time. Pater's famous description of the Mona Lisa, on the other hand, seeks to restore the resistance of the work of art by drawing on a rhetoric of sculpture different from the one presented in the Winckelmann essay.

Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there ... She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave ... (80)

In contrast to Gilbert's statue, Lady Lisa knows everything of life and death. She is not smooth and white like Greek marble sculptures, but raw like the rocks amongst which she sits and saturated with blood. She has a life of her own that is not imposed by the spectator: her beauty is internal, 'wrought out from within'. Yet, she is not entirely rigid: the centuries have 'etched and moulded' her, inscribing the passions and knowledge of the ages. She has become a palimpsest. The beauty of the Mona

Lisa is not her timelessness, but the fact that she is saturated with time. To her observer, she neither offers the leap out of time nor the collapse into the present.

Given the rejection of ‘natural’ love and female beauty presented in the Winckelmann essay, it is surprising that Pater presents the image of a woman as the masterpiece of the Renaissance. However, the point Pater is making here is that Lady Lisa is unlike other women and he is not the only critic to question her sex. Gautier, for instance, praised the strange beauty of Leonardo’s figures and commented on the Mona Lisa’s androgyny (Bullen 276). Moreover, as Dellamora points out, Pater had earlier speculated that the Mona Lisa might have been a “transvestite self-portrait” of Leonardo himself (*Desire* 144). But, unlike the boy androgyne, the female androgyne does disturb the logic of the male gaze and resists a heterosexual model of explanation. To be sure, the power dynamic is not reversed: the Mona Lisa looks back, but she does not gaze. It is precisely this tension between engagement and detachment that frustrates and calls into question the phallogentric gaze directed at her. Through his reading of the painting as self-portrait, Pater suggests that the male artist can, indeed, ‘change sex’ and find fulfilment in passive abandonment rather than active desire.

The two readings of the androgynous statue, as boy androgyne and as female androgyne, are brought together in Swinburne’s “Hermaphroditus”, one of the poems published in Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads, First Series* (1868). Describing the sculpture of *The Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, which Swinburne had seen in Paris in 1866, the relationship between the viewer and the statue is rendered in explicitly erotic terms. Swinburne was heavily influenced by the French literary tradition; he was an ardent admirer of Gautier and introduced the English translation of *l’art pour l’art* into British usage. During his studies at Oxford, Swinburne had also read Balzac’s *Seraphita*. His response to the novel is telling: “a *lusus naturae*, hermaphrodite, quasi-eunuch, or—something ... I cling to physical interpretations” (*Lesbia* 404). In contrast to Gautier, Swinburne did not focus on the novel’s idealism, but prioritised the materiality of the androgyne. According to Dellamora, Swinburne was interested in “literalizing androgynous conceptions” and thereby “signals the body to be the locus of mingled sensations, fantasy, and reverie that may be ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ in connotation – or both” (*Desire* 71; his emphasis).

In “Hermaphroditus”, perverse eroticism derives from the male viewer’s illicit desire for the irresistibly ambivalent statue (“Two things turn all *his* life and blood to fire”) as well as from the statue’s resistance to this desire (12; my emphasis). The difference between the observer and the lifeless statue is emphasised through the description of sleep. Like the androgyne, the sleeper represents self-absorption and totality, but also absence. In contrast to Galatea, who fully responds to her lover’s touch, Hermaphroditus remains in the position of the sleeper, suspended in a singular moment “between sleep and life”, dream and reality, activity and passivity, movement and stasis (15). What, the speaker asks, is the purpose of a being, who fails to respond to the “strong desire” s/he inspires (14)?

To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?

...
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
To thee that art a thing of barren hours? (37-42)

The contrast is one of abundance and lack: Hermaphroditus comprises everything at once and yet cannot produce anything. Decorated with “all the gold that all the seasons wear”, the orderly progression of time collapses into simultaneity and overabundance (41). From the point of view of the observer, however, Hermaphroditus represents a time that fails to reproduce and thus negates itself. It is the androgyne’s unnatural doubling of sex that turns “the fruitful feud of hers and his / To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss” (18-19).

It is the statue’s sterility as well as its resistance to a ‘natural’ heterosexual and marital relationship that makes it so appealing to the observer. Sterility is seductive for Swinburne because it implies a relationship that serves no procreative purpose and is therefore ‘unnatural’. Moreover, sterility comes to be associated with passivity and serves to represent sadomasochistic desire. The sexually unresponsive figure evokes the sadistic pleasure of enforcing an illicit desire at the same time as it plays into the masochistic desire for humiliation and rejection. Swinburne’s masochism was expressed in his interest in flagellation, which is the only ‘perverse’ sexual practice he is known to have engaged in: Swinburne reportedly asked female prostitutes to flog him after he had acquired a taste for flagellation at Eton, where he was physically punished by one of his male tutors (Dellamora, *Desire* 84). As

Stephen Marcus has argued, flagellation between men, or rather between man and boy, was often used as a code for male-male desire (*Victorians* 260). Following Marcus, Dellamora reads “Hermaphroditus” as a poem about sodomy with the male viewer taking the passive role (*Desire* 81-83). In asking the statue to come to life, to become active, the male viewer is trying to create a passive sexual position for himself. In this fantasy, the boy androgyne assumes the sexually active role and thus reverses the hierarchy between the active viewer and the passive statue. This reversal of sexual roles also opens up the possibility of reading the poem as a fantasy about the phallic women, who, according to Elisabeth Gitter, is always on the verge of becoming “a hermaphrodite, if not ... a boy” in Swinburne’s poetry (952). The dream of the living statue holds out the promise of sexual transgression and allows the male viewer to explore alternative sexual experiences, in this case, a passive sexual role.

The fact that passive male sexuality only becomes available in the fantasy of the living statue, a fantasy that, as the poem itself shows, can never be fulfilled, also shows a resistance to the subversion of sexual roles. Indeed, “Hermaphroditus” is also a poem about the male viewer’s sadistic desire to force a passive and unresponsive partner into submission. Swinburne’s poetry and fiction abound with unresponsive objects of desire such as portraits (“Before the Mirror”) or decaying bodies (“The Leper”).¹² In “Hermaphroditus”, the unavailability of the viewer’s object of desire is reinforced in three different ways: s/he is androgynous, asleep and a statue. In “Fragoletta”, which appears immediately after “Hermaphroditus” in *Poems and Ballads* and shows a strikingly similar use of imagery, the androgynous body is legible as that of the phallic lesbian. Like the Medusa, the female androgyne has “a serpent” in her hair, but the castrating female gaze is disciplined as the lyrical I exclaims, “thou shalt not rise” (51; 58). Once castrated, the body of the phallic woman is subsumed under the phallogentric gaze in a cannibalistic sexual act (Bashant 12). Similarly, Swinburne’s novel *Lesbia Brandon* ends with a scene of orgiastic cannibalism when Herbert kisses the dying Lesbia and “devour[s] her fallen features with sharp sad kisses” (164).

¹² See Alkalay-Gut for a discussion of some of these texts along the lines of activity and passivity (232-235).

In “Hermaphroditus”, however, the statue does not offer itself up for the observer’s consumption. The speaker implores Hermaphroditus to “Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best; ... Strive until one be under and one above”, but the anticipated moment of certainty is denied (6-8). The speaker realises that “by no sunset and by no moonrise / Shall [Love] make thee man and ease a woman’s sighs, / Or make thee woman for a man’s delight” (35-36). Despite this lack of satisfaction, the poem ends with a description of the sexual encounter between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus: “the boy’s breath softened into sighs” (55). Dellamora reads “metamorphosis/liquescence/bliss” into the final stanza and highlights that the male speaker suddenly refers to himself in the plural, which means that he might now be male or female (*Desire* 82). For Wendy Bashant, on the other hand, Hermaphroditus’ ‘sighs’ are an expression of resignation and point to the loss of potency (13). This reading emphasises the male viewer’s failure to bring the statue to life through ekphrasis. As William Wilson argues with regard to the portrait in “Before the Mirror”, Swinburne’s work of art “tells no tale, it yields no narrative” (431). The same applies to “Hermaphroditus”, a poem that, according to McGann, resists “cognitive enclosure” and will not “yield up its secret” (*Swinburne* 151). Indeed, the indulgent doubling of images used to describe Hermaphroditus (“Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies, / Or like the night’s dew laid upon the night”) mirrors the idea of veil upon veil without underlying truth, which shows that the androgynous statue can only be grasped through displacement (31-32).¹³

The male viewer’s loss of a clearly gendered point of view at the end of the poem indicates that the phallogentric gaze has failed to possess the statue. But for Swinburne, the loss of a stable sense of self and the frustration of desire are pleasurable in their own right. The success of ekphrasis here no longer depends on the violent bridging of the gulf between observer and statue – even though this violence is part of the erotic appeal of the encounter. Rather, it is the breakdown of the heterosexualised relationship between observer and statue and, by extension,

¹³ Of course, the displacement of meaning also served a practical purpose and gave Swinburne greater freedom in the subject matters he could represent. Like many of his contemporaries, John Morley, a reviewer for the *Saturday Review*, condemned *Poems and Ballads*, stating that “[t]he only comfort about the present volume is that such a piece as ‘Anactoria’ will be unintelligible to great many people, and so will the fevered folly of ‘Hermaphroditus’ as well as much else that is nameless and abominable” (24). Given Morley’s reaction, the unintelligibility of “Hermaphroditus” can also be seen as a means of avoiding censorship.

ekphrastic narrative that holds multiple sexual and textual possibilities for Swinburne. At the beginning of the chapter, we saw that Shelley struggled with the question of how to ensure that the material desire of the artist does not corrupt the ideal. Swinburne eroticises this struggle and presents it as the prerequisite to artistic production. The statue does not make itself available for material possession in the present, but it is the material desire it evokes and subsequently negates that provides the content of the ekphrastic poem itself. Art is derived from the sensual encounter between observer and statue, but because the material desire for the androgynous statue can never be fulfilled in the here and now, this desire continues to reference an ideal sphere of beauty.

Completing the Fall

This belief in ideal meanings became more and more volatile throughout the nineteenth century as materialist explanations of the world gained in significance. Gillian Beer points out that Darwin resisted “the Platonic scheme which makes of things insufficient substitutes for their own idea” and refused “all attempts to distinguish meaning from matter” (36). For this reason, Aestheticism is often seen as radically dissimilar to materialist discourses like Darwinism. However, the focus on sterility and the negation of progressive time, for instance, are concerns shared by Aestheticists and Darwinists. Indeed, Swinburne was highly influenced by evolutionary thought, which he interpreted as a form of liberation from Christian theology and from the suppressive “fear of supernatural vengeance” as Lionel Stevenson argues (52). In poems like “Hertha” or “The Hymn of Men”, which appeared in *Songs Before Sunrise*, Swinburne emphasises the transitory quality of human knowledge and the inability to predict the course of human development. This feeling of uncertainty is always closely connected to the fear that man might not be going anywhere at all and that time might come to an end. However, Swinburne contrasts this negation of time with a focus on the very endurance of life. In “Hymn of Man”, he writes that “Men perish, but man shall endure; lives die, but the / life is not dead” (161). The Teutonic goddess Hertha acknowledges that it is “hard to be free”, but nevertheless calls on man to embrace the unpredictability of the future

knowing that they are part of its underlying life force just as the latter is part of them: “For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look / forth now and see” (208; 210-211). Visions of unity pervade the ending of the poem, its final line reading: “Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me / man that is I” (239-240). The unity at the origin of life, described at the beginning of the poem, is repeated at its very end, which points to a cyclical structure underlining the promise of a return to primordial wholeness. Thus, Swinburne continues to appeal to a transcendental creative force that provides stability and order even in the face of a chaotic material world.

This shows that Aestheticist writers were not oblivious to the natural world. In fact, the persistent rejection of natural processes of procreation can be read as the expression of an underlying horror of an overabundant material universe. For Wilde, the stripped veil is not associated with the promise of transcendence, but with the horror of the material world, which it helps to obscure. Wilde’s critic “will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamour of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the veil be torn” (144). The veil neither obscures a universal and eternal truth nor makes available a material reality the critic wishes to engage with. Instead, it emerges as an artificial distancing device, a tool of mediation, by virtue of which the critic can sublimate his perception of the material world and approach the ideal. Similarly, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, d’Albert asserts that he cannot “embrace the material world ... [or] engage with anything” only to lapse into an elaborate description of a dream that employs a decidedly material and, in fact, proto-Darwinian rhetoric (218).

My soul is a strange country; in appearance it is splendid and seems to flourish, but it is in fact more saturated with putrid and noxious miasma than the land of Batavia. The least ray of sunlight on the slime makes the reptiles hatch and the mosquitoes swarm. ... It is as charming as can be; but it’s a hundred to one that in the grass under the bush a hydropic toad is limping and slithering along, leaving trails of silver drool upon the path. ... You have planted corn. Asphodels, henbane, rye grass and pale hemlock, with its stalks covered in verdigris, grow here instead. In the spot where you have buried a root, to your great surprise, the hairy, twisted legs of the black mandragora are coming up out of the ground. If you leave a memorial here and come to retrieve it some time later, you will find it more greened over with moss and

swarming with woodlice and disgusting insects than a stone placed on the damp floor of a cave. (217-218)

The material world d'Albert describes engulfs the only artificial object in it, the man-made memorial, and thus proves itself superior to the world of art and to the individual subject. The splendour and threat of d'Albert's fantasy can be read as a powerful anticipation of the horror and the beauty of the Darwinian world in which, to borrow Kelly Hurley's words, "no transcendent meaningfulness anchors the chaotic fluctuability of the material universe" (9). Not wishing to acknowledge his implication in a material world that excludes the human subject, d'Albert internalises his vision. He sees it as an image of his own soul, a product of his imagination rather than a reality that lies outside of himself. The Aesthetic rejection of the material in favour of art can be read as an expression of the terror of a Darwinian universe resistant to claims of artistic control. In this world, the fallen androgyne emerges as the haunting figure of the hermaphrodite, discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Hermaphroditism and the Politics of Presence

The fertilised germ ... is crowded with invisible characters, proper to both sexes ... and to a long line of male and female ancestors separated by hundreds or even thousands of generations from the present time: and these characters, like those written on paper with invisible ink, lie ready to be evolved whenever the organization is disturbed by certain known or unknown conditions. (Darwin, *Variation* 35-36)

[T]he [Mystic Writing-]Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written ... (Freud, 19: 230)

Darwin and Freud helped to construct a present that can no longer fully know itself. In their writings, the body and the mind are no longer exclusively defined by the way they appear in the present, but have to be understood in relation to a not fully comprehensible past. Both writers emphasise the backward gaze, the attempt to reconstruct a course of development according to certain rules and laws. The fragments of the past that are thus uncovered are both far away (Darwin speaks of 'hundreds or even thousands of generations'), yet they are also intimately close. In fact, Darwin's ghostly letters and Freud's palimpsestic writing-pad imply that the past *underwrites* the present and is not clearly distinguishable from it. The past has the potential to return, to unsettle the present and to make it foreign to itself.

This chapter argues that this form of temporal disorder is central to nineteenth-century discourses of hermaphroditism. Darwin and his contemporaries insisted on sexual difference and drew on concepts of disorderly development (developmental arrest, regression, latency, rudimentariness and vestigiality) to account for the hermaphroditic body and to contain it within a stable temporal and sexual order. However, these very same concepts also threatened the reliability of the relation between past, present and future, as the hermaphroditic body acted as a material reminder of the fact that sexual otherness was part of the individual and the species' past and could resurface at any given moment: the sexed body was haunted by the possibility of hermaphroditism. Foucault declared as much when he

characterised the nineteenth century as "a century ... powerfully haunted by the theme of the hermaphrodite" ("Introduction" xvii). This chapter proposes that 'haunting' should not only be read as a sign of the discursive prevalence of hermaphroditism at a time when it was ruled out as a 'real' human possibility; it also hints at the as yet undertheorised importance of temporality in relation to the understanding and representation of hermaphroditism. Discussing discourses on hermaphroditism along the lines of haunting reveals the success and failure of the temporal strategies used to reject the material reality of the hermaphroditic body. It also illustrates how the hermaphroditic body came to be associated with a more general interest in the relationship between past, present and future, and related questions concerning the irrational and the rational, the primitive and the progressive. In the work of writers like Thomas Hardy and Oskar Panizza, the figure of the hermaphrodite serves to problematise precisely these distinctions.

Haunting

In arguing that hermaphroditism emerged as a scientific and medical problem in the nineteenth century, this chapter is at danger of contributing to a myth, which is often attributed to Foucault. In his introduction to the *Memoirs of Herculine Barbin*, he claims that it was possible to think of an individual as having two sexes in previous centuries. He further maintains that this opened up the possibility of free choice for the hermaphroditic individual (viii-ix). In her study of *Early Modern Hermaphrodites*, Ruth Gilbert has exposed this assumption as reductive, maintaining that "pre-enlightenment England was never the wonderland that Foucault imagines" (3). According to Gilbert, the hermaphroditic body always tended to confuse sociocultural order. What does change in the wake of the Enlightenment – and in this sense Foucault is correct – is that the hermaphroditic body ceases to be seen as a monstrosity or marvel. Instead, it is embedded in a rational and scientific epistemological framework that insists on material explanations and truths. Gilbert, for instance, quotes James Parsons' *A Mechanical and Critical Enquiry into the Nature of Hermaphrodites* (1741), in which he declares that, scientifically, hermaphroditism in human individuals was not a possibility (159). The same

sentiment is expressed in an article that appeared in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1808. John Smith Soden, a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, maintains that “[t]he term hermaphrodite, which has frequently been applied to these cases, is not so generally used by medical writers as formerly. It is believed, that no real hermaphrodite ... ever existed” (33). Parson and Soden agree that the belief in hermaphroditism is superstitious and irreconcilable with scientific explanations. This view is expressive of the growing faith in rational thought, which does not allow for phenomena to be perceived as monstrous or miraculous. The hermaphroditic body could no longer be accommodated by what Mladen Dolar has called “the area of the sacred and untouchable ... this privileged and excluded place (that constituted [premodern] society)” (7). With the loss of a space that could confer meaning to the monstrous body, teratological phenoma such as the hermaphroditic body had to be accounted for on a purely scientific and material level.

This was problematic, however, as matter came to bear the burden of sexual difference. Historians generally agree that in the course of the eighteenth century, sexual difference was inscribed on the body and given a material basis. Thomas Laqueur influentially theorises this process as a shift from the one-sex model (which holds that women and men are not radically different physically, so that cultural norms – ‘gender’ – come to determine sexual difference) to the two-sex model (which prescribes a “radical dimorphism” and projects it onto a material level) (6).¹ Sexual difference was seen as a mere reflection of material truths and became an ontological category. Lorna Schiebinger agrees with Laqueur, explaining that “modern materialistic theories ... grounded sexual difference in the fabric of the human body” (38). It is for this reason that Parsons and Soden not only declare the belief in hermaphroditism to be superstitious, but also claim that it is possible for the scientist to discover the individual’s true and singular sex. Even if Foucault’s assumption of the hermaphrodite’s ‘free choice’ is somewhat hasty, he is correct in saying that medical and scientific discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth

¹ Laqueur’s paradigmatic shift from a one-sex-model to a two-sex-model has been harshly criticised. Daston and Park maintain, for instance, that natural marvels like hermaphroditism had been accounted for through the use of causal explanations since the sixteenth century. According to them, the end of the eighteenth century witnesses a shift towards a conception of nature that no longer leaves room for any exceptions (205-214). It is precisely this loss of an epistemological space that could contain ‘impossible’ phenomena that the argument presented in this chapter draws upon.

centuries turned hermaphroditism into a problem that demanded a material solution: the “deciphering [of] the true sex that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances” (“Introduction” viii). Moreover, scientists sought to explain the hermaphroditic body as a deviant yet rationally explicable form of development that did not fundamentally oppose the paradigm of sexual difference. The attempts to account for the hermaphroditic body as a material reality were really due to the desire to subsume it under the sign of sexual difference, to discount it.

Paradoxically, however, in order for the hermaphroditic body to become accountable or discountable on a scientific basis, its material presence had to be affirmed in the first place. This shows that the unfaltering desire for scientific and materialistic explanations brought forth phenomena it could not contain. According to Terry Castle, this tension is characteristic of Enlightenment culture as a whole, which “produced, like a kind of toxic side effect, a new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, bafflement, and intellectual impasse” (*Thermometer* 8). In his essay on “The Uncanny”, Freud discusses the implications and problems of a rationalist culture and maintains that the uncanny emerges once “the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality” (17: 244). This is precisely what occurred when the hermaphroditic body gained material presence in a context that could not accommodate it and yet could not help but insist on its reality. Because the hermaphroditic body’s material presence could not be affirmed, it became a temporally conflicted figure, a body that had to be grounded *in* time as an object of scientific analysis, but was also projected *out* of time, as it resisted the terms that governed material possibility.

One way of approaching the conflicted materiality and temporality of the hermaphroditic body is to draw on the rhetoric of haunting, which describes a corruption of the sexual politics of presence, the rules that govern who and what can be affirmed in the present. Put simply, haunting is about the confusion of absence and presence. The language of haunting not only underwrites the scientific and literary discourses that seek to describe the hermaphroditic body, as the following discussion shows, but is also expressive of more general feelings and anxieties characteristic of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century culture. It is now a

commonplace that the nineteenth century was preoccupied with questions of the past, origins and genealogies. Historical sciences (geology, paleontology, archaeology, embryology and evolution theory) complicated the relation between past, present and future, as they constructed a vision of the past that the individual could no longer easily relate to. In the words of J.W. Burrow, “a relative lack of historical sense ... helped men to feel at home with the past”; the greater knowledge of a massively expanded past acquired over the course of the nineteenth century changed this relationship fundamentally (20). At the same time, historical knowledge was considered to be of primary importance to an understanding of the present. The past became strange to the present while still forming a constitutive part of it. In other words, the experience of the present was intertwined with an experience of a past that was not fully knowable and remained distant. The resulting uncertainties and anxieties are expressed in discussions of the hermaphroditic body, which comes to stand not only for sexual disorder, but also temporal disorder.

It is important to understand that haunting cannot be reduced to the disturbance of the present by recurring elements from the past. In fact, to reduce haunting to a return of past elements, like the generic ghostly return of the dead, is already a strategy to contain the disruptive potential of haunting. Indeed, Avery Gordon asserts that haunting is not just a means of unknowing or subversion, but also “a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening” (8). If Darwin and Freud draw on gothic metaphors of a haunted language to conceptualise models of development and consciousness, this is certainly not expressive of a wish to undermine the systems of knowledge they seek to establish. Rather, haunting becomes available as a specific way of thinking about and governing the relationship between past and present.

‘Noble Genealogies’

The question of temporal order was central to embryology and evolutionary theory, which were dedicated to the reconstruction of the development of the individual (ontogeny) and the species (phylogeny). Evolutionary and embryological models of development maintained that the only rationally affirmable temporal position the

hermaphroditic body can lay claim to is the primordial past of the species or the individual. Darwin asserted that "some remote progenitor of the whole vertebrate kingdom appears to have been hermaphrodite or androgynous" (*Descent* 189). For him, hermaphroditism was an Ur-form of life, far removed from human reality and firmly placed in the past, as sexual difference was presented as the prerequisite to higher development. He strictly ruled out the possibility of hermaphroditism in higher organisms - and hence in humans:

Are we ... to suppose that some extremely ancient mammal continued androgynous after it had acquired the chief distinction of its class, and therefore after it had diverged from the lower classes of the vertebrate kingdom? This seems very improbable, for we have to look to fishes, the lowest of all the classes, to find any existent androgynous forms. (*Descent* 189)

Sexual difference was presented as the result of *necessary* past developments leading from undifferentiated origins to the complexities of the present. To become human, it was claimed, the species and the individual had to overcome their hermaphroditic origins and differentiate into two separate sexes.

Nevertheless, the very discovery of a hermaphroditic past of the individual and the species proved that sexual difference was not an immutable characteristic, something that had 'always already' been established. The wish to describe the different stages of development, to uncover the history of the species and the individual organism, inevitably led embryologists and evolutionists further and further back into a past that did not offer a secure origin. Instead, the past was characterised by a threatening lack of order and differentiation. As Gillian Beer has pointed out,

evolutionary theory implied a new myth of the past: instead of gardens at the beginning, there was the sea and the swamp. Instead of man, emptiness – or the empire of mollusks. There was no way back to a previous paradise: the primordial was comfortless. (118)

The embryological turn to epigenesis as opposed to preformationism had a similarly unsettling effect. As opposed to miniatures of fully developed and clearly sexed bodies that simply needed to grow in size, embryology maintained early on in the nineteenth century that the (sexually differentiated) organism was not preformed or predetermined in the egg or sperm, but that Wolffian and Mullerian ducts coexisted in the embryo until about the eighth week. By the middle of the century, it was

known that penis and clitoris, labia and scrotum, and ovaries and testes were correlated, as they developed out of the same embryonic structure (Laqueur 169). Thus, embryology constructed the image of an undifferentiated and sexually ambivalent organism and located it at the origin of all human life.

Darwin was well aware of the scandalous implications of his claim that human life had a shared hermaphroditic origin. In a letter to Charles Lyell, he expressed the rather unpleasant implications of his thoughts in a humorous manner: “*Our* ancestor was an animal which breathed water, had a swim bladder, a great swimming tail, an imperfect skull, and undoubtedly was an [sic] hermaphrodite. Here is a pleasant genealogy for mankind!” (266; his emphasis). Instead of offering a proud genealogy, science alluded to “old androgynies, grounded this time not in myth or metaphysics, but in nature”, as Laqueur puts it, and showed that the origins of development were corrupted by a contingent sexual otherness (169). Darwin’s contemporaries did not only take issue with his ideas concerning the mutability of species or human descent, but were also particularly offended by the notion of a human hermaphroditic past. In his review of *The Descent of Man*, published in the *Athenaeum* in 1871, for instance, John R. Leifchild refused to reproduce the passage that referred to the possession of a rudimentary uterus and mammae in male mammals, as Gowan Dawson has pointed out (43). What becomes apparent is that nineteenth-century science itself “occasion[ed] a sense of metaphysical estrangement in their popular readership, as they reconfigur[e]d the world” (Hurley 20). At a time when science was relied upon to establish the material truth of sexual difference, scientific discourses began to reconstruct a past of the individual body and the body of the species that did not offer any stabilities.

The Darwinian Trace

The idea of a troubling past that comes to confuse present figurations of sexual difference is also central to Darwinian discourse. Indeed, Darwin’s rejection of the possibility of human hermaphroditism needs to be understood in relation to the strictly limited meaning of the term in his writings, which referred to organisms that

were capable of parthenogenesis or self-reproduction.² In this sense, Darwin needs to be understood in the context of a more general emphasis on the gonads as the privileged marker of sexual truth.³ However, he did not rule out the possibility of sexual ambivalence manifesting itself in or on the individual human body.⁴ In fact, he problematised the very distinction between primary and secondary sex characteristics, stating that “[u]nless indeed we confine the term ‘primary’ to the reproductive glands, it is scarcely [sic] possible to decide which [sex characteristics] ought to be called primary and which secondary”, as most markers of sex were regularly found in the members of the opposite sex (*Descent* 241-242). Traces of primordial sexual otherness could always disrupt the present figuration of sexual dimorphism, as primary and secondary sexual markers were regularly found in members of the 'opposite' sex. Darwin pointed out that “[t]he reproductive system [of mammals including humans] offers various rudimentary structures; ... part[s] efficient in the one sex, and represented in the other by a mere rudiment” (*Descent* 41). The vestige or rudiment could be interpreted as proof of the possibility of cross-overs, the transmission of 'male' characteristics to the female and vice versa, over time:

That various accessory parts, proper to each sex, are found in a rudimentary condition in the opposite sex, may be explained by such organs having been gradually acquired by the one sex, and then transmitted in a more or less imperfect state to the other. (*Descent* 189)

Moreover, Darwin thought it possible to “restore the structure of our early [hermaphroditic] progenitors ... by means of the rudiments which man still retains,

² The prerequisite for an organism to be able to reproduce autonomously would be the existence of *functional* ovaries and testes in the same body (as well as inner and outer reproductive organs that would allow for autoinsemination) a condition that is clearly not fulfilled in relation to the human species and would furthermore make the concept of (hetero-)sexual selection redundant. In contrast to Darwin, medical practitioners did not insist on the *functionality* of the gonads, but simply based their diagnosis on their anatomical existence, as Dreger has shown (153).

³ Dreger has argued that the gonads emerged as the key marker of sex in the realm of medicine towards the end of the nineteenth century. Over the course of the century, the meaning of the term 'hermaphrodite' came to be restricted to a phenomenon that could not be fulfilled by human organisms: the existence of both male and female gonads in the same body. Thus, the gonads emerged as the primary marker of sex and served as the logical means to eliminate ‘true’ hermaphroditism, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period Dreger describes as the ‘age of gonads’.

⁴ For Grosz, Darwinian evolution theory provides an admirably flexible model of sexual difference that is highly relevant to twenty-first century feminist theory. Darwin insists on a radical difference between the sexes yet hesitates to define this difference in fixed terms. His is “a nonessentialist understanding of the (historical) necessity of sexual dimorphism” (67).

by the characters which occasionally make their appearance in him through reversion" (*Descent* 188). Because of their link to the past, the hermaphroditic body fascinated medical authorities and evolutionary theorists alike, as it was associated with the promise of revealing secrets of the embryological past and the past of the species.⁵

At the same time as the hermaphroditic body helped to reconstruct and invent the past *as the past*, it also invested this past with a threatening actuality and presence. As the opening quote indicates, the Darwinian universe did not offer the promise of unwritten letters remaining unseen forever. The rudiments belonging to the opposite sex could not only reappear unexpectedly, but they could also be reactivated. To illustrate his claim, Darwin raised the question of how one can account for the existence of nipples in male mammals including humans, which

can indeed hardly be called rudimentary; they are merely not fully developed, and not functionally active. They are sympathetically affected under the influence of certain diseases, like the same organs in the female. They often secrete a few drops of milk at birth and at puberty. (*Descent* 191)

Male nipples exist because "long after the progenitors of the whole mammalian class had ceased to be androgynous, both sexes yielded milk, and thus nourished their young" (*Descent* 190). Their functionality only deteriorated due to external influences such as a reduced number of offspring as a result of which "the male ceased to give this aid, [and] disuse of the organs during maturity would lead to their becoming inactive" (*Descent* 191). This showed that changes in environment could lead to alterations in the structure and function of the sexed body, an argument that was to inspire grave concern regarding the impact social, cultural and environmental changes might have on the differences between the sexes.

Finally, Darwin contradicted earlier evolutionists such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who had interpreted sexual differentiation as a symptom of developmental progress, and employed the idea of the *scala naturae*, the chain of being, "with man at the head of a long series of animals, leading gradually downward to plants and

⁵ Towards the end of the century, post-Darwinian experts in the field of hermaphroditism such as the French doctor Jean Samuel Pozzi continued in the tradition of Simpson and "used the opportunities presented by hermaphrodites' unusual anatomies to discover embryological homologies in males and females" (Dreger 64). Similarly, in Britain, the gynecological surgeon Robert Lawson Tait used Darwinian theories of evolution in order to account for hermaphroditism and saw hermaphrodites as proof of Darwinian theories (Dreger 66).

unorganized matter" (Ghiselin 368). Darwin, on the other hand, pointed out that the differences between the sexes are, in fact, more pronounced in 'lower' species such as the mandrill, and famously replaced the evolutionary ladder or chain with the tree, a metaphor evoking "change and potential" (Beer 33). Darwin's assertion that "[a]n unexplained residuum of change must be left to the assumed uniform action of those unknown agencies, which occasionally induce strongly marked and abrupt deviations of structure" fundamentally undermined static conceptualisations of sexual difference (*Descent* 83). Darwin made it clear that "our ignorance of the laws of variation is profound" so that sexual differentiation and development emerged as dysteleological processes, interdispersed with moments of regression and characterised by spontaneous and uncontrollable variation (*Origin* 202). The past was no longer safely contained, but came to trouble the present and future, as Darwinism created a "temporally divided *self* ... inhabited by 'vestiges' of earlier stages" (Armstrong, *Cultural* 7; his emphasis). The resurfacing traces of original hermaphroditism pointed to the failure of the assumed teleology of sexual development and highlighted the potential breakdown of a distance between past and present and a progressive understanding of development. Grosz speaks of a process of "self-overcoming" in which past virtualities press upon the present, propelling it towards a future it can neither know nor anticipate (89).

The confusion of temporal order Darwin describes also anticipates Derrida's hauntology, in which, according to Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, "past and present cannot be neatly separated from one another, as any idea of the present is always constituted through the difference and deferral of the past, as well as the anticipation of the future" (10-11). More specifically, the Darwinian vestige resembles the Derridean trace. Darwin maintained that vestiges could "sometimes retain their potentiality, and are merely not developed" (*Origin* 429). This anticipates Derrida's concept of the trace, which corrupts the present by opening up "the horizons of potential presence, indeed of a dialectic of protension and retension that one would install in the heart of the present instead of surrounding it with it" (Derrida 67). The Derridean insistence on the supplement as the constitutive absence of presence is similar to the unsettling latency of a hidden potential expressed in Darwin's writings,

but it also relates to Freud's uncanny, the *heimlich-heimisch*.⁶ In Freud's essay on "The Uncanny", the idea that the possibilities of presence exceed what could be contained in the present is discussed with regard to questions of rationality and primitivism, and, as we shall see, sexual difference.

Womb Fantasies

The belief that the past could simultaneously illuminate and complicate the present was central to Freud's conception of mental processes. In his *Studies on Hysteria*, he explicitly refers to Darwin to construct a historical explanation for the hidden significance of hysterical symptoms, which "originally had a meaning and served a purpose" even though they appear nonsensical in the present (2: 181).⁷ In "The Uncanny", Freud continues to draw on the rhetoric of the trace to describe how a disavowed past comes to disrupt the certainties of the present. Even though Freud draws on evolutionary and embryological rhetoric, he is primarily concerned with stages of rational as opposed to biological development and he tends to disavow the material implications of the uncanny. Indeed, his essay on the uncanny attempts, but fails to install a rational subject that has overcome an experience of the world in which the borders between the imagination and material reality are not clearly defined. In this sense, the essay is both a reflection on and an example of the challenges to Enlightenment rationalism that resulted from the discovery of a material world that was in excess of the present.

Freud describes the uncanny as an aesthetic concept, but, for an essay preoccupied with questions of the imagination, the text is very much invested in biological language. Embryonic development, for instance, plays a central role, as Freud states that the uncanny idea of being buried alive is derived from the "phantasy ... of intra-uterine existence" (17: 244). He further points out that neurotic men often express that "they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs" as the vagina reminds them of "the entrance of the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the

⁶ Derrida presents his reading on the Freudian trace in *Writing and Difference* (246-291).

⁷ The relationship between Darwin and Freud has been widely discussed. Sulloway provides a useful overview of Freud's indebtedness to Darwinian thought (*Freud*; especially 257-276).

beginning” (17: 245). The uncanniness of the female body here results from an association with the embryonic past and the destabilisation of sexual difference occurring at the very beginning of human development. Freud also comments on the uncanny female body in his case study of Leonardo da Vinci. Drawing on infantile sexual development, Freud argues that the male child originally believes that all human beings have a penis, so that “the male genital [is] found compatible with the picture of the mother” (11: 95). However, the idea of the hermaphroditic mother, the mother-with-penis, is overcome when the child realises that women do not have a penis. This is the moment in which castration anxiety is first experienced, as the child understands that the penis can be lost. In this context, Freud writes that the idea of a missing penis in women appears “uncanny” to the male child (11: 95). Given that Freud defines the uncanny as that which is “secretly familiar”, the male child can only perceive the sight of castration as uncanny if he is already familiar with the process of castration (17: 245). Kaja Silverman draws out the implications of this idea through a comparative reading of “The Uncanny” and Freud’s later essay on “Fetishism”, in which he repeats the idea that the female genitals provoke the fear of castration. Silverman argues that if

the spectacle of female castration strikes the male viewer as ‘uncanny’, he himself must already have experienced castration; ... even before the so-called castration-crisis, the male subject has an intimate knowledge of loss – that he undergoes numerous divisions or splittings prior to the moment at which he is made to fear the loss of his sexual organ. (17)

The site of this earlier moment of castration is the womb, which explains the multiple references to embryological development in Freud’s essay on the uncanny. The womb can be seen as the literal representation of what Nicolas Royle calls the “space of polysexual possibilities”, possibilities which are lost through castration when a primordial hermaphroditic state is overcome in the course of prenatal sexual development and sexual difference is established (42). In this sense, the references to the womb in “The Uncanny” allow for a complementary reading in which the loss of the hermaphroditic origins of embryonic development precedes the moment in which the male child realises his vulnerability to castration consciously for the first time. The womb fantasies are unsettling, precisely because they remind the individual of the prehistoric hermaphroditic body, which is not radically foreign, but uncanny or

secretly familiar – it is the body that had to be lost in order for sexual difference to be established.

Freud associates this hermaphroditic body with a lower stage of sexual, but also rational, development. In order to understand Freud's logic here, it is important to note that he followed Ernst Haeckel's highly influential recapitulation hypothesis.⁸ According to Haeckel, individual development mirrors the development of the species: over the course of his or her development, the human individual will retrace the stages of human evolution from primitive origins to the culturally advanced stage of modern man (Rohy 4). If hermaphroditism is posited in the past of the species, if it is primitive, it also predates cultural progress. More specifically, for Freud, hermaphroditism predates the emergence of the self-conscious and rational male subject. This gendered logic derives from his conflation of the hermaphroditic and the maternal body. Freud associates the space of the womb and the hermaphroditic maternal body with a pre-rational femininity that threatens to envelop – or castrate – an emerging male rationality.

This gendered logic, according to which the primitive is conflated with the feminine, is also at work in descriptions of prenatal development in nineteenth-century embryology. Hermaphroditism could theoretically be explained as a result of an arrest of embryonic development at an early stage where all genitals are of the same size. In an exemplary move, however, James Simpson explained in 1871 that “when females are malformed in the sexual part so as to resemble the male, the malformation is almost always one of excessive development” (490-491). The idea that the female body's masculine appearance was the result of a surplus of development, while the male body's feminine appearance resulted from lack, can hardly be perceived as ideologically neutral. Simpson further argued that “physiologically at least, we ought to consider the male type of organisation to be the more perfect as respects the individual, and the female the more perfect as respects the species”, which points to a link between masculinity and civilisation, and femininity and nature (490). Freud inherits this gendered model of sexual

⁸ In his “Three Essays on Sexuality”, for instance, Freud maintains that “[o]ntogenesis may be regarded as a recapitulation of phylogenesis” (7: 131). Freud further explains that, for him, “more weight is attached to ontogenesis than to phylogenesis”, that is to say, cultural rather than dispositional influences (7: 131). Despite this caveat, many of his developmental models remain committed to Haeckel's concept.

development in which hermaphroditism is associated with femininity and primitivity, presenting an early and therefore hierarchically lower stage of ontogenic and phylogenic development.

The distinction between primary and advanced stages of development is central to “The Uncanny” as a whole. Castle has pointed out that the entire text is supported by evolutionist logic and often reads like “a version of the familiar psychoanalytic distinction between the archaic and the contemporary, the ‘primitive’ and the civilized” (*Thermometer* 9). This distinction is most clearly expressed in the two different categories of the uncanny feelings Freud introduces towards the end of his essay. Uncanny feelings can arise as a result of primitive beliefs on the one hand, and repressed infantile complexes on the other.

Where the uncanny comes from infantile complexes the question of material reality does not arise; its place is taken by psychical reality. What is involved is an actual repression of some content of thought and a return of this repressed content, not a cessation of *belief in the reality* of such a content. We might say that in the one case what had been repressed is a particular ideational content, and in the other the belief in its (material) reality. But this last phrase no doubt extends the term ‘repression’ beyond its legitimate meaning. It would be more correct to take into account a psychological distinction which can be detected here, and to say that the animistic beliefs of civilized people are in a state of having been (to a greater or lesser extent) *surmounted* ... (17: 249; his emphasis)

Uncanny feelings can either originate in primitive beliefs or in infantile sensations. The difference between the two relates to the perception of material reality. Primitive beliefs challenge the very opposition between reality and fantasy. Animism, for instance, invests objects with agency, allowing them to come to life. For Freud, this primitive stage of development has been surmounted. It can still affect contemporary thought, but when it does, it will quickly be discounted as soon as it is checked against reality. For the sane person, it is “purely an affair of ‘reality-testing’, a question of the material reality of the phenomena” (17: 248). Freud leaves no doubt, for instance, that the agentic body parts he evokes – “[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist” – are located in the realm of literature or pathology (17: 244). Their uncanniness does not trouble the distinction between the material and the imaginary as they do not stand the test of reality. Infantile complexes give rise to the second variety of uncanny feelings. Merely repressed – as

opposed to surmounted – infantile complexes are prone to haunt the present as phantasms. They do not, however, affect material reality either since they are merely psychical and were never thought of as real to begin with.

What becomes apparent here are the *material* limitations of the Freudian uncanny. Freud sets out to argue that the uncanny effaces the distinction between imagination and reality. He does not, however, seem to follow through with the potentially radical implication of this destabilisation of the borders of reality and imagination. To him, the “over-accentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality”, the failure to take into account the limitations of what is and what is not possible on a material level, is pathological, a symptom of infantilism often found in neurotics (17: 244). This means that hermaphroditism is doubly excluded from the realm of material reality: as an image associated with the infantile castration complex, it is dematerialised, reduced to a mere phantasm that can be remembered, but never appear on a material level. If hermaphroditism does problematise the distinction between imagination and material reality, it automatically falls under the category of primitive beliefs that have been surmounted. The hermaphroditic body is dematerialised on the ontogenic and the phylogenic level. Just as the individual and the race have physically outgrown hermaphroditism, they have also rationally overcome it. Thus, hermaphroditism is posited as a phenomenon of the past that has no material claim on the present, which is paradoxical since the entire essay sets out to explain how phenomena of the past do come to interrupt the present.

If the hermaphroditic body is the ‘blind spot’ Freud cannot address in “The Uncanny”, this is because to acknowledge it would be to risk the collapse of a masculinised authority that claims to be able to speak rationally *about* the uncanny. As a figure of the primitive and irrational, the hermaphroditic body would threaten to castrate the male subject if it were to become present again. As Hélène Cixous has stated in her critical reading of the essay, for all the emphasis on castration, “the entire analysis of the *Unheimliche* is characterized ... by Freud’s *resistance* to castration and its effectuality” (535; her emphasis).

At the same time, however, Freud plays with ideas that undermine this rigid scheme. He acknowledges that the “two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable” (17: 249). Especially with regard to childhood

complexes, the boundaries can easily be blurred. This implies that even allegedly surmounted primitive beliefs which problematise a rational view of material reality can, under certain conditions, reoccur. Freud stresses that “we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs [that set us apart from our primitive forebears], and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon confirmation” (17: 247). In a footnote about the uncanny experience of seeing his own double, he further speculates that the dislike of the double is “a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction” (17: n.248). The recurrence of primitive beliefs is here repressed (it appears only in the footnote), but it is not fully surmounted and it continues to trouble the perception of reality if only for a brief moment. The image of the vestige mirrors the ‘permanent traces’ Freud evokes in his essay on “The Mystic Writing-Pad”, where everything is retained if only as a trace or remnant. In a Freudian universe in which, as Cixous states, “nothing is ever lost ... nothing has even disappeared and nothing is ever sufficiently dead”, even surmounted beliefs can continue to trouble the present (543).⁹ Freud himself admits as much in his late essay “Analysis Terminable and Indeterminable”, where he writes:

Of all the erroneous and superstitious beliefs of mankind that have supposedly been surmounted there is not one whose residues do not live on among us to-day [sic] in the lower strata of civilized peoples or even in the highest strata of cultural society. What has once come to life clings tenaciously to its existence. One feels inclined to doubt sometimes whether the dragons of *primaeval* days are really extinct. (23: 229)

A radical reading of the uncanny allows for the pre-natal and pre-rational hermaphroditic body, the ‘dragon of *primaeval* days’, to haunt and confuse the very politics of presence, to challenge what counts and what fails to count as a material reality in the present. It is in this reading that Freud’s uncanny resembles the Darwinian conception of a present that can never be fully known or completely controlled by the individual.

⁹ The figuration of loss constitutes one of the central differences between Darwin and Freud. As we have seen, Freud maintains that nothing is ever lost. For Darwin, on the other hand, loss is a necessary and, in fact, productive part of the evolutionary process in which certain species make room for others through extinction, thus furthering the overall course of development.

Finding a New Language

As the two quotations cited at the beginning of the chapter indicate, the changed conception of the present developed by Darwin and Freud placed new demands on language and narrative. The metaphor of the written and yet invisible letters on the page draws attention not only to the process of writing and the imagination, but also to the possible failure of the human sense to perceive and represent the overabundance of material possibilities. As Cixous' close reading of "The Uncanny" has shown, Freud's writing turns against itself, so that the essay is haunted by the failure of rational discourse. Darwin also struggled with the task of inventing a new language capable of coming to terms with the new view of the material universe he had helped to shape. Darwinian evolution theory had constructed a massively extended past that largely excluded the human individual. At the same time, Darwin emphasised that the present was characterised by a material abundance that threatened to explode the capacity of the human mind and senses. Furthermore, the future was open to unforeseeable and unpredictable changes that could not be anticipated by a human observer. Thus, the Darwinian universe did not seem to offer a position from which a human spectator could write knowingly about the world around him. To deal with this problem, Darwin struggled to strip language of its intentionalist overtones, to "expunge from language the suggestion that will is a force for change" (Beer 20).

An awareness of the necessarily limited perspective of the individual in a Darwinian universe is evident in the writings of Hardy and Panizza. Both can be classified as naturalist writers due to their interest in scientific (as opposed to supernatural or spiritual) explanations, their focus on (hereditary and social) determinism, and their largely pessimistic stance towards the human subject. But their writings do not assert an objective viewpoint and rather draw attention to the necessarily limited perspective of the human individual in a Darwinian universe. Even though Hardy and Panizza wrote in different national context and different languages, both were heavily influenced by Darwinian thought. According to Michael Millgate, Hardy took pride in the fact that he was amongst the first readers of *The Origin of Species* and Darwin's influence on his work is well-documented

(88).¹⁰ Panizza had also read Darwin early on in the 1870s. Panizza's notebook, written when he was twenty, records his interest in the anatomy of human sexual organs and Darwin's *Descent of Man* (M. Bauer 92). Panizza and Hardy draw on the hermaphroditic body and the rhetoric of haunting and the trace to depict the corruption of the present and to subvert notions of authority, control and rationality. The figure of the hermaphrodite allows them to challenge the distinction between past and present, the supernatural and the scientific, the irrational and the rational.

'maphrotight fool': Hermaphroditism in *The Return of the Native*

The character of Christian Cantle in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878) is often overlooked in critical discussions of the novel.¹¹ Christian is a member of the peasant community of Egdon Heath, located in Hardy's Wessex. He is a minor character that serves to offer comic relief due to his lack of virility and his exaggerated fears and superstitions. When Hardy revised the novel in 1895 and then, again, in 1912, he made small but significant changes to those passages dealing with Christian.¹² When Christian is introduced in the first edition of the novel, he describes himself as "the man no woman will marry", and proceeds to recount a story in which he tried to court a village woman, but was rudely rejected with the words: "Get out of my sight, you slack-twisted, slim-looking fool" (29).¹³ In the 1912 Wessex Edition, Hardy amended this insult to: "Get out of my sight, you slack-twisted, slim-looking maphrotight fool" (quoted in Slade n.401). On the one hand, the dialectical corruption of the term 'hermaphrodite' is characteristic of Wessex peasant talk and adds to the humorous depiction of Christian. But to reference superstitious accounts of hermaphroditism in the year 1912 also has to be read as a peculiarly anachronistic gesture given that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourses show an obsession with the attempt to grasp the hermaphroditic body as an object of

¹⁰ For discussion of Darwin's influence on Hardy, see, for instance, Levine and Beer (220-241).

¹¹ To the best of my knowledge, the character of Christian Cantle has not yet been discussed in terms of hermaphroditism. Richardson calls Christian a "hermaphrodite" in an essay on the life sciences, but she does not elaborate on Hardy's novel or Christian's role in it ("Life" 18).

¹² The novel was first published serially in *Belgravia* magazine in 1878. Tony Slade has discussed the textual evolution of the novel (xxxix-xlv). He has also traced the textual changes Hardy made and comments on the figure of Christian in particular (n.401).

¹³ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from the Penguin Classics edition, which reproduces the original 1878 three-volume edition of the novel.

rational analysis. As we shall see, the stronger emphasis on Christian's hermaphroditism helped Hardy to draw attention to the split between two frames of reference: the premodern and superstitious world of Egdon Heath, where Christian is still at home, and the modern and rational world, in which he no longer makes sense and comes to be associated with topical anxieties. The figure of the hermaphrodite allows Hardy to stage the clash between these two worlds and to problematise the position of the rational and self-knowing subject in a Darwinian universe.

Throughout the novel, Christian is established as a part of the rural Egdon Heath community. Despite his name, Christian follows pagan beliefs and inhabits a magical and doomed world. The other peasants and villagers gently mock him, commenting on his inability to find a wife, his superstitious fears and childish behaviour. Repeatedly, they encourage Christian to 'act like a man', often with comical effect. Even though the villagers make fun of him, they ultimately share the same frame of reference, which is premodern and superstitious. His lack of virility, for instance, is seen as the direct result of his being born during a moonless night as the saying 'no moon no man' maintains that "[t]he boy never comes to anything that's born at new moon" (29). Because superstitious belief still provides explanations for individuals like Christian, he is accountable for in the world of Egdon Heath with its folkloric tales and rural rituals. Indeed, Egdon Heath itself is described as "prehistoric ... as unaltered as the stars overhead, [it] gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New" (12). Clym Yeobright, the native of the novel's title, represents the 'New', as he has returned to his home in order to become a teacher, but his desire to educate the rural community fails and he becomes a furze-cutter instead. Wessex is presented as a place immune to the individual human life that fails to alter its course and to cultural progress itself.

Nevertheless, the rural community is also presented as a world on the edge of extinction. When Hardy revised the novel in 1912, he was aware of the fact that the Wessex of his youth "was faced with overthrow" and that "he was the historian of a Wessex now passed" (Gatrell 23; 31), which implies that rural tales that could still accommodate individuals like Christian have been overcome. In the rational and modern framework of Hardy's readers, which is also introduced to the novel in the form of Clym's educational efforts, the primitive and the hermaphroditic take on a

more threatening dimension. Writing at the beginning of 1879, only a few days after the final installment of *The Return* had appeared, Hardy presents his “New Year’s thought. A perception of the FAILURE of THINGS to be what they are meant to be, lends them, in place of intended interest, a new and greater interest of the unintended kind” (quoted in Beer 232). Beer reads this as an expression of Hardy’s fascination with maladaptation, the development of traits that do not directly benefit the species and might even threaten the organism’s chance of survival (232). In addition to his lacking virility and his inability to find a wife, Christian is also described as having ‘caul’, being born with the fetal membrane covering his face. For Christian, this is a sign of good luck, but for a reader who is aware of the irony of this assumption, it carries further associations of embryological malformation and morbidity. The changes Hardy made to the representation of Christian in subsequent editions of *The Return* serve to emphasise the material implications of his bodily failure, the fact that he cannot help the species to progress and is doomed to extinction. In the first edition, Christian describes himself as “only the rames of a man, no good in the world” (30). In the Wessex Novel edition of 1895, Hardy amends the phrase to “no good to my race”, which carries a more obvious degenerationist undertone (quoted in Slade n.401). Because sexual difference was posited as the outcome of development, the hermaphroditic body, which has fallen away from the genus, was perceived as degenerate or backward, a sign of the species’ failure to progress.

These fears also came to be associated with a perceived end of time. Christian’s failure to reproduce makes him pointless in a cruel Darwinian universe with its assertion of uncontrollable variation and material abundance at the cost of a deadly surplus of life. As Angelique Richardson points out, the very term ‘fin de siècle’ points to a “biologization of time” (“Life” 21). The sterile hermaphroditic body came to represent the apocalyptic fear of time coming to an end. The fears of extinction and finality appear again and again in Hardy’s work. In *Jude the Obscure*, for instance, Jude’s illegitimate son kills himself and his siblings, because he realises that there is no use for them in this world. The note he leaves simply states: “Done because we are too meny [sic]” (325). The death of their children leaves Jude and Sue, as Beer points out, “aberrant, without succession, and therefore ‘monstrous’ in the sense that they can carry no cultural or physical mutations into the future and

must live out their lives merely at odds with the present” (240). The fact that this child is called ‘Little Father Time’ reinforces the deadly qualities of a time that can fail to reproduce itself. Read in the context of a turn-of-the-century culture obsessed with degeneration and endings, evolutionary by-products like Christian are nothing but a sad joke of nature, superfluous and therefore doomed to extinction.

By emphasising the degenerationist undertones of the hermaphroditic character in the revised publications, Hardy draws attention to the untimeliness of the hermaphrodite, a figure that can no longer be accounted for in a modern rational belief system. In doing so, however, Hardy also uses Christian to keep alive the premodern frame of reference that can accommodate him. By presenting the clash between the superstitious and the rational framework and positioning the hermaphroditic body in both, Hardy points to the fact that once superstitious beliefs were allegedly overcome, the rational mind failed to fully understand the world. Hardy was opposed to absolutist explanations of the world and was interested in the relation between the modern and the premodern, the rational and the irrational. In a letter to Edward Wright, for instance, he writes: “I am utterly bewildered to understand how the doctrine that, beyond the knowable, there must always be an unknown, can be displaced” (quoted in F. Hardy 370).

Throughout the novel, Christian unwittingly proves himself to be the character that is most perceptive to the unknown forces that deliver a blow to the belief in human and particularly male authority. When a barrow is opened up on Egdon Heath, for instance, he breathlessly tells Mrs Yeobright:

They have dug a hole, and they have found things like flower-pots upside down, Miss'ess Yeobright; and inside these be real charnel bones. They have carried 'em off to men's houses; but I shouldn't like to sleep where they will bide. Dead folks have been known to come and claim their own. (189)

The archeological excavations taking place on the Heath point to Hardy’s keen interest in the past. For him, archeology exposed the vast span of history that excluded the individual in the present. According to Robert Schweik, Hardy’s writings themselves reveal “the way in which human aspirations are dwarfed in the vast dimensions of archeological time” (61-62). In contrast to the educated Clym, who watches over the excavations and then gives one of the artifacts to Eustacia Vye, Christian does not view the vessels as valuable, but feels haunted by them. In

contrast to the archeologist or the collector, he fails to own the objects as tokens of the past that can be placed in a meaningful relation to the present. His superstitious fear of the excavations mirror Hardy's feelings regarding the haunting potential of a universe in which traces from the past cannot be owned or possessed and in which time outdoes the human subject.

Christian's uncertainties regarding his masculinity also mirror Hardy's preoccupation with gender in other works. When Christian wins a dress during the famous dice scene, he comically fails to comprehend what to do with the prize:

"'Mine?' asked Christian, with a vacant stare from his target eyes 'I - I haven't got neither maid, wife, nor widder belonging to me at all, and I'm afeard it will make me laughed at to hae it ... What shall I do wi' a woman's clothes, and not lose my decency! (219)

Instead of viewing the dress as a gift that he could use to gain the interest of a woman, Christian knows that he will be mocked for owning the dress, possibly because people might assume that he wants to wear it himself. While this comically underlines Christian's already questionable masculinity, it also highlights the subversive quality of the feminine in Hardy's work. Several contemporary reviewers commented on the primitive and uncivilised nature of Hardy's women that placed them outside a recognisable social order (Brady 94). Havelock Ellis, for instance, commented on "the instinctiveness" of women like Eustacia in *The Return* and added that "[t]here is ... something elemental, something *demonic* about them" ("Novels" 117; his emphasis). Hardy's 'demonic' women represent the mysterious forces of an unknown universe and further unsettle the male subject.

During the dice game, Christian believes that the dice represent his luck and are at his command, but this fleeting notion of control is already belied in his personification of the dice as "curious creatures ... powerful rulers of us all" (219). Later on, he describes the dice as "wonderful little things that carry my luck inside 'em'" (220). The magical powers Christian attributes to the dice once again position him in a premodern world in which the animistic beliefs Freud discusses in "The Uncanny" originate. Here, power relations between subject and object have shifted and Christian is at the mercy of the dice. While his superstitions are comical, they also take on a greater significance in that they represent the forces of chance that control human life in a Darwinian universe. The other characters in the novel might

laugh at Christian, but Hardy implies that the joke is also on them. Like Christian, they inhabit a world governed by unknown and uncontrollable forces.

As we have seen, Hardy draws on the figure of the hermaphrodite to produce an unsettling confusion of past and present belief systems. He indicates that the forces that govern human life lie outside the grasp of the individual and cannot be explained rationally. His interest in Darwinism was partially derived from the fact that Darwin did not pretend to offer grand explanatory schemes, but rather reinforced an understanding of the present that is always in excess of any individual point of view.

“A Scandal at the Convent”

Panizza is one of the most notorious figures of early German modernism. He belonged to the school of Munich naturalism spearheaded by his friend Michael Georg Conrad, who was acquainted with Zola and Ibsen. According to Peter Jelavich, Munich naturalists believed that “the social relevance of art was to be achieved not through passive observation but active engagement: forceful and critical personalities were supposed to project new values into the social and political arena” (26). Indeed, force and criticism were not lacking in Panizza’s writing. His literary prominence was partly based on his scandalous satirical work as a playwright, for which he was sentenced to a year in prison due to charges of blasphemy. Panizza’s strong rejection of religion and his embrace of a rational and scientific understanding of the world were aided by the fact that he himself had studied medicine in Munich. He had completed his residency in a mental hospital and had worked as a medical officer in the Bavarian military before a stipend from his mother allowed him to focus exclusively on his literary career. If Panizza gave up the medical profession, his interest in psychological and physical difference, and pathology continued to affect his literary work. Panizza was, for example, heavily influenced by the work of Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso and he satirised Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* in his *Psychopathia Criminalis*. Panizza’s collection of short stories, *Visionen der Dämmerung* ‘*Visions of Dusk*’, in which “A Scandal at the Convent” was first published in 1893, also shows his keen interest in the psychopathology of

marginalised groups. The common denominator of these stories is what Peter Brown has described as Panizza's "quest for a presentation of real phenomena, regardless of their ugliness, impropriety, vulgarity, or horror" (6).

"A Scandal at the Convent" is loosely based on the memoirs of Herculine Barbin. Raised as a girl in mid-nineteenth-century France, Barbin was diagnosed as a male pseudo-hermaphrodite and legally changed sex before committing suicide.¹⁴ In 1881, Panizza had spent several months in Paris and it is possible that he came across Ambroise Tardieu's treatise of hermaphroditism, in which Barbin's memoirs had been reproduced, here. Almost a century later, Foucault discovered the memoirs in the French Department of Public Hygiene and published them together with additional medical studies, press reports, legal documents and letters as well Panizza's story, thus offering a multiplicity of perspectives on Barbin's life story. In his introduction, Foucault comments on the "radical changes" Panizza made in his adaptation of the original case ("Introduction" xvi). In Panizza's story, Barbin appears as Alexina, a poor, but highly intelligent 18-year-old convent student. Alexina falls in love with Henriette, a wealthy and beautiful girl, who holds a privileged position in the convent because she is the niece of the Head Sister. The story describes the events that ensue in the convent after Alexina and Henriette are found naked in bed one morning. Panizza not only changed the names of the characters, but he also altered the narrative mode from first-person to third-person and transposed the story in time. Since Barbin is no longer speaking for himself, Foucault reads these alterations as signs of the continuous effacement of the hermaphrodite:

Panizza presents her [Alexina] only in the fleeting profiles which the others see. This boy-girl, this never eternal masculine-feminine, is nothing more than what passes at night in the dreams, the desires, and the fears of everyone. Panizza chose to make her only a shadowy figure, without an identity and without a name, who vanishes at the end of the narrative leaving no trace. ("Introduction" xvi)

However, it is also possible to argue that Panizza's story not only repeats, but exposes the precarious balance between presence and absence, effacement and affirmation, that characterises representations of hermaphroditism in the nineteenth

¹⁴ In keeping with the idea that the gonads were the true marker of sex, pseudo-hermaphrodites were classified as male or female depending on whether the individual had testes or ovaries.

century. In contrast to Foucault, I argue that "A Scandal at the Convent" does not only participate in, but also critically comments on the struggle to grant the hermaphrodite presence. In this sense, it is a story *about* untimeliness rather than a story that reinforces the untimeliness of the hermaphroditic body. In fact, Panizza ultimately counters the immaterialisation of the hermaphrodite and resists the deferral of the hermaphroditic body into the past.

Panizza's decision to write a short story about the relationship between two apparently female students in an all-girls convent needs to be read in the context of a fin-de-siècle culture preoccupied with the figure of the New Woman. The term is generally reserved for a new generation of (mostly middle- and upper-class) British and American women who sought emancipation and university education. German *Frauenrechtlerinnen* envied these New Women, as the gender politics in Wilhelmine Germany offered fewer chances (Dieth 428). One of the fears associated with the figure of the New Woman was that education might 'un-sex' or virilise women. Writing about New Women in the Anglophone context, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains that

[t]he selfish woman who, despite the plea of educators, legislators, and physicians, insisted on placing her own intellectual fulfillment above her duty to the race, not only risked nervous exhaustion and wasting diseases; she might also develop dangerously masculine physiological characteristics (260).

Ernst von Wolzogen's novel *Das Dritte Geschlecht* (1899), written as a critical response to the burgeoning women's movement in Germany, repeated similar ideas. Von Wolzogen pejoratively comments on the "neue Weib", who rejects marriage, demands equal rights and education, and thereby 'forgets' her femininity, turning into a barren and crippled neuter instead (11). If women could 'turn' into men, it was also feared that they might fall in love with each other. In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, published in Germany in 1896 and in England in 1897, Ellis maintains that the "unquestionable influences of modern movements [such as the women's movement] can[not] directly cause sexual inversion ... but they develop the germs of it, and they probably cause a spurious imitation" (178). Differentiating between congenital and non-congenital ('spurious') inverts, Ellis explained that the superior intelligence of the congenital invert often allowed her to seduce girls that would

otherwise not develop homosexual feelings. As, according to Ellis, "it is in the school, at the evolution of puberty, that homosexuality first shows itself", places of female education were seen as breeding grounds of homosexuality (1st ed. 163). The rhetoric used to differentiate between different types of female inverts was derived from discussions of hermaphroditism, where true hermaphroditism was set apart from spurious or pseudo-hermaphroditism. Panizza teases out the implications of the partially shared history of the lesbian and the hermaphrodite by placing a highly intelligent individual of uncertain sex in an all-girl convent.

Unsettling constructions of sexual difference, the lesbian and the hermaphrodite were both perceived as harbingers of degeneration. Panizza, however, problematises the idea that the lesbian and the hermaphrodite are temporally backward by showing that it is the *response* to Alexina and Henriette's relationship rather than the relationship itself that causes a regressive lapse into primitivism. In the opening paragraph, the convent itself comes to be associated with the regression to outdated systems of thought. Setting the story back in time to the year 1831 (seven years before Barbin's birth and about twenty-five years before the historically recorded medical redesignation of Barbin's sex), Panizza moves the events closer to the French revolution in which aristocracy and clergy were largely stripped of their privileges. The convent had originally been secularised and was then "reverted to its original purpose" in order to provide girls from noble families "prerogatives from which they were debarred in the capital cities, notably Paris" (155). The convent's regression to its clerical origins highlights that it is an anachronistic institution consciously seeking to hold on to a repressive social and cultural order whose time had come.

The regression to outdated belief systems is also reflected in the response to the affair between Alexina and Henriette, and Alexina's physical difference. The female students, nuns and villagers are convinced that "an incubus" or perhaps even "the Devil himself" has manifested himself in the shape of Alexina and has raped Henriette (190). The mass hysteria culminates in a scene the Abbe aptly describes as "[q]uite medieval", when an angry mob gathers in front of the convent, demanding drastic measures to be taken (178). While the Abbe himself pretends to take a more detached interest in the "moral aspects of the case", it soon becomes obvious that his

desire to learn about every intimate detail of the sexual encounter between Alexina and Henriette is far from scientific (171). The scandal gives him reason to spend hours consulting the Ecclesiastical Dictionary to look up entries on ‘Sapphism’, ‘Lesbos’ and ‘Tribadism’, before reading some of Sappho's poetry and interrogating his students, the Head Sister, and Alexina herself to satisfy his curiosity. The final outcome of his studious attempts to understand the situation is not different from the instinctive response of his students, as he concludes that the origins of the case must be linked to

classical antiquity, to the time before the Prince of Darkness had been chained down, when he was free to play his infamous tricks on mankind, such as entrapping pagan women in hopelessly evil courses in the form of 'tribadism,' a relic of which, a mere thread still manifested itself in the nineteenth century, even in convents, bearing witness that the power of Evil had not yet been entirely subdued. (173)

The Abbe describes Alexina and Henriette's relationship as a vestige of premodern sexual practice, but the story comically exposes that it is his reading – rather than Alexina and Henriette's relationship – that is regressive. While the Abbe pretends to defer the scandal into the past, his obsessive investigations only serve to construct in more and more detail the very reality of sexual transgression. The Abbe discovers that far from being a singular moment of transgression, the affair "went back many months, ripening slowly, like a wasp's nest growing cell by cell until a huge hive had formed" (187). The metaphor of an organic and natural growth counters the idea of momentary demonic possession, of a fleeting lapse into a sinful and unlawful past. Whereas the development of the wasp hive is used to describe the relationship between Alexina and Henriette, its danger is displaced onto the other students, which are described in animalistic terms as a swarm of bees or bats that spread panic and disorder.

This lapse into chaos and disorder is emphasised through the breakdown of temporal order. Initially, the narrative is highly structured temporally, as the third-person narrator strictly follows the routine of convent life and keeps the reader informed about the exact time of day. Lewis Mumford has argued that mechanical time was produced in medieval monasteries, where the clock first produced “the habit of order ... and the earnest regulation of time-sequences”, hailing the dawn of a rational and scientific modern industrial age (121). The discovery of the students’

affair results in the collapse of daily routine and, by extension, rationality. This is reflected in the quickening pace of the narrative, for which the narrator apologises when he explains that he

cannot give the reader a rest. He must race with us through the whole scandalous affair just as it happened, in the few hours of one afternoon. He must fly with us like a bat out of hell through this Breughel-like witches' sabbath inside a convent. There is no time to dwell on details, not even to pause and catch one's breath. (172)

The orderly routine of convent life that leaves time for thought and study is replaced by disorder and chaos.

At the end of the story, a young doctor from Paris appears like a *deus ex machina* to resolve the dilemma. Representing rational order and scientific belief, he politely declines the "Abbe's proposal to begin by going over Bodin's list of stigmata" (192). He proceeds to examine Alexina and concludes that an exorcism is not needed: Alexina is a man, albeit a physically 'deformed' one, and he should be removed from the convent immediately in order to take his rightful place in society. The confrontation between the medical and religious discourse is played out as a clash between progress and regression, present and past, young and old. If the young doctor appears as the epitome of progress, the narrative rendition of the medical examination belies any hope in scientific objectivity and clarity:

A single lamp was lit in the adjoining room, seen through the half-open door, where Alexina, crouching partly undressed on the edge of the bed, awaited the doctor. After a few words to Madame, he went inside, closing the door, not quite completely, with a casual movement of his hand. Despite Madame's efforts to insulate herself by noisily turning the pages of her book, the following sounds could be heard: a brief murmur and the formulas of greetings; a series of terse questions, tersely answered. ... The lamp was moved so that all the light was gone from the minimal opening of the door. A directive was given, followed by the sounds of garments being slipped off. The order was repeated more firmly; a sigh, and the sounds of more clothing being pulled off, sounds of slipping, ... and then a soft, slippery gliding, like skin on skin ... A long pause, then another order; the bed creaking, then the sound of a body slipping onto a mattress; ... Then Alexina suddenly cried out, loudly and explosively. There was an indistinct reply from the doctor, whose uneven breathing suggested that he was concentrating hard, meeting with difficulty. (192- 193)

The otherwise largely omniscient narrator's perspective is limited to the point of view of the Head Sister in the adjoining room so that the proceedings of the sexual

examination are presented with the air of scandal, secrecy and illegitimacy. The idea of scientific objectivity and visual truth is undermined, as the nocturnal procedure is only witnessed through a half-opened door as a series of vague auditory impressions that allow for the most incriminating interpretations. There is nothing enlightened about the scientific exam, which is experienced on a purely auditory level. The language used ('a soft, slippery gliding, like skin on skin'; 'the sound of a body slipping onto a mattress') implies that the doctor's exam is tactile and physical rather than visual and detached. Left in the dark, the reader experiences an uncanny loss of sight that is entirely unexpected, as the doctor initially promised to shed light on the case and to solve the story's mystery.

The details included in the doctor's statement, which is reproduced at the end of the story, underline the intimate and sexual nature of his examination. According to the medical report, the doctor was unable to penetrate Alexina's vagina, which ended blindly. However, during the exam, "an involuntary emission of semen" was provoked, the analysis of which has shown Alexina to be able to produce "normal and mobile" sperm (199). The language used in the report emphasises the ambiguity of Alexina's genitals, which are described in feminine terms only to be declared to be those of a man in the end.¹⁵ The gonadal criterion, proven by the production of sperm, outweighs the contradictions of Alexina's physical appearance and the complexities of his/her self-identification, which are only alluded to. Through his depiction of the medical exam, Panizza clearly encourages a critical reading of scientific discourse. The scientific understanding of hermaphroditism is shown to be as primitive and unenlightened as the convent's superstitious response. Whereas the Abbe and his students lapse into an overcome system of belief that allows them to demonise the hermaphroditic body, the doctor's insistence on the gonadal truth of Alexina's body is exposed as a similarly reductive attempt to maintain a singular sex by repressing the complexities of the sexed body.

However, if Panizza problematises medical discourse, he is also complicit with it, as he does not offer any alternative to the scientific model provided. A crude determinism seems to underwrite the idea that Alexina thinks, feels and behaves like a man because of her gonadal anatomy. Alexina struggles with the conventions of

¹⁵ The slippery language used mirrors the ambivalent rhetoric in the medical report on Barbin (Neuman 417-418).

femininity and is highly intelligent because of her 'natural' maleness, which is asserted at the end of the narrative. In Foucault's reading, Panizza repeats the violent gesture of the medical authorities that force Barbin into a scheme of sexual difference, as he does not offer Alexina the ability to speak for himself or herself, but rather has her disappear without a trace. The only information the reader is given about Alexina's whereabouts after the scandal is that s/he "was returned to her village and her parents" (199). This implies that Alexina's adventures have come to an untimely end, as he is returned to the place he escaped from in the first place, when he was still living as a girl.

Yet Panizza's decision to exclude Barbin's untimely death and his alteration of the medical data so as to stress that the fictional Alexina is "capable of procreation" also opens up the possibility of a more subversive reading (199). As we have seen, in a Darwinian universe, Alexina's potential reproductivity is of great importance. While the reader does not learn about Alexina's future, it is important that Panizza opens up the possibility of a future for her/him. In this sense, Alexina is clearly set apart from the Abbe who is characterised by complete stasis and sterility. The day after the scandalous events, the Abbe returns to the routine of everyday life none the wiser. Caught in the anachronistic power structures of the convent, the Abbe proves immune to progress. Ironically, then, it is the hermaphrodite who can potentially fulfill the divine order to procreate, which is cited in the epigraph of the story, and who emerges as the only possible harbinger of futurity.

By not having Alexina speak, Panizza not only deprives him or her of a voice, but also crucially withholds the answer to the question of whether Alexina affirms or rejects his *or* her fate as a man. Indeed, throughout the story, s/he is presented as a cunning and at times even malicious character, easily capable of manipulating her surroundings so as to benefit from them. It is therefore not at all self-evident that Alexina would passively accept her diagnosis or stay in her parents' village. If Alexina disappears into the shadows at the end of the narrative, as Foucault has it, the virility Panizza invests him/her with shows that this effacement is not necessarily a defeat; nor is it final. Rather than disappear without a trace, Alexina can be read *as a trace*, because it remains unclear if s/he is fully integrated in a present governed by sexual difference. S/he is invested with the potential to continue

to haunt the present and to produce a possibly even more troublesome future. Alexina presents a rupture in the sexual politics of presence, as s/he lays claim to, but also continues to exceed the present.

If Alexina's silence holds power, what happens when the hermaphrodite does begin to speak and to tell his or her story? Turning to the growing significance of autobiographical case histories in sexological discourse, the next chapter explores the difficulties involved in translating into narrative form physical experiences and desires that threaten to explode the possibilities of the present. Autobiographical narrative can enable the individual to lay claim to a subject status, a presence, which he or she might otherwise not have. But the inherent restrictions of narrative can also govern who counts as a subject and whose stories are granted affirmation in the first place. After all, as we have seen in this chapter, narrative was used to tell stories that placed the hermaphroditic body firmly in the past. Sexology and psychoanalysis continued to narrate sex, to describe how sex unfolded over time. These narratives presented a temporal order that enabled but also governed the stories individuals like Alexina could tell about themselves.

Chapter 3

Narrating Uncertainty

[A] few doctors will make a little stir around my corpse; they will shatter all the extinct mechanisms of its impulses, will draw new information from it, will analyze all the mysterious sufferings that were heaped up on a single being. O princes of science, enlightened chemists, whose names resound throughout the world, analyze then, if that is possible, all the sorrows that have burned, devoured this heart down to its last fibers. (Barbin 103)

When Herculine Barbin committed suicide in 1868, an autobiographical manuscript was found in his apartment in Paris. The document was passed on to Ambroise Tardieu, a French physician and well-known authority on hermaphroditism at the time. Whereas the remains of the actual manuscript are unknown and it is possible that it did not survive, Tardieu published large extracts of Barbin's manuscript verbatim in the 1874 study *Question Médico-Légale de l'Identité* (61-174). The fact that Tardieu decided to include Barbin's own words as part of his treatise is surprising given that Thomas Laqueur has described the nineteenth century as "the great age of the post-mortem" in which "[t]he autopsy, not the interview, was the moment of truth" (188). Tardieu's publication of Barbin's autobiographical manuscript is an early expression of the explosion of autobiographical case histories in sexological writings of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. As sexologists began to draw on autobiographical accounts to provide empirical evidence of new taxonomies and models of sexual development, the subject's voice came to be seen as a necessary complement to the factual scientific description of the body.

The resulting tension between personal account and scientific analysis is anticipated by Barbin when he describes his own autopsy in the passage quoted above. A thick irony underwrites his description of the 'princes of science' and 'enlightened chemists', who seek truth in anatomic fact. Barbin implies that the truth of the self cannot be fully comprehended through an examination of the body no matter how intimate. He asserts the difference between the subjective truth conveyed by his own voice and the objective factual truth offered by his dead body. This assumed difference between a privileged inside perspective and an externalised point

of view constitutes autobiographical writing, which is understood in opposition to a biographical and externalised gaze. At the same time, however, Barbin unsettles the distinction between an externalised and an internalised view of the self. Imagining himself as a “future dead person”, to borrow Carla Freccero’s turn of phrase, he writes himself out of the present moment and becomes detached from the subjectivity of lived experience and the body itself (Dinshaw et al. 184). Taking the stance of an outsider, physically and temporally removed from the scene of his own autopsy, his perspective paradoxically emerges as the objective one. This confusion between inside and outside, objective and subjective, is typical of autobiography itself, which involves self-observation, so that the subject has to become a stranger to himself or herself in order to claim insight. In Barbin’s account, it is impossible to determine whether the truth of the self is situated on the outside or the inside, whether it resides in his body or is detached from it.

This chapter further explores these tensions, examining the complexities of the autobiographical case history in sexological writings and focusing specifically on cases of mistaken sexual identity or uncertain sex. It is no coincidence that Tardieu’s reproduction of Barbin’s manuscript is one of the first examples of autobiographical case histories dealing with questions of sexuality. Often, the riddle of uncertain sex could not be solved through a physical exam so that doctors were forced to rely on their patients’ self-understanding to be able to designate his or her sex. Cases like that of Barbin showed that sexual knowledge could sometimes only be gained through an engagement with the subject’s own voice and, by extension, autobiographical narrative.

Like other forms of autobiographical writing, the autobiographical case history is a hybrid genre that challenges generic and disciplinary distinctions. It is uneasily positioned on the borders of autobiography and biography as well as literature and science, and draws attention to the interaction of narrative, self and body. Critical attention has been paid to the way in which case histories came to shape the discipline of sexology in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. However, there is a marked tendency to focus on case histories dealing with what we would nowadays classify as homosexuals. Case histories of proto-transsexuals and

proto-intersexuals, on the other hand, have not been discussed in as much detail.¹ This oversight is partially due to the comparatively low number of case histories dealing explicitly with transsexual or intersexual subjects in sexological publications in English.² However, since the terminology we use to differentiate between these distinct subject positions was not available at the time when the case histories were produced, the way in which we come to understand who is speaking to us in these personal accounts is also at least partially a reading effect. One of the problems that arises is that sexual inversion has often been taken as a misnomer for homosexuality. According to Jay Prosser, this resulted in the disregard for questions of physical difference and embodiment, which were viewed as side effects of an allegedly reductive and pathologising understanding of homosexuality that sought to project inversion onto the physical body (“Transsexuals” 117). By moving away from reductive understandings of sexual intermediacy, it becomes possible to pay closer attention to the specificities of cases of mistaken sexual identity or uncertain sex, which often blur the lines between homosexuality, transsexuality and intersexuality. These cases grant important insights into the way in which the relation between self, body and narrative came to be understood.

Translating lived experience into narrative does not only involve the selection, but also the sequential ordering of events, thoughts and feelings. This means that, like other forms of autobiographical writing, the autobiographical case history raises questions of time. Through an examination of autobiographical case studies from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, this chapter examines the demands sexually intermediate bodies placed on narrative constructions of the

¹ Oosterhuis’ comprehensive study of Krafft-Ebing’s case histories focuses exclusively on homosexuality. Prosser has challenged readings of case studies that efface possible transgender identification in favour of homosexual readings (*Skins*, 140-152; “Transsexuals”). Bullough has presented a similar argument, showing that an emerging transsexual subjectivity can be traced in sexological case histories before transsexuality became an accepted diagnosis in the 1920s (81). With regard to intersex, Dreger has focused on the relationship between patients of uncertain sex and medical authorities in the nineteenth century, but her work does not consider sexological case histories.

² In contrast to Ellis, Hirschfeld was a practising physician. His thriving Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin was a central point of contact for individuals who were unsure about their physical sex or sought to change their sexual status. Hirschfeld and his colleagues would physically examine patients whereas Ellis would usually rely on letters that were sent to him, which is why the physical appearance of subjects often does not figure explicitly in his work. As a result, the case studies in *Sexual Inversion* favour readings that concentrate on homosexuality and overlook other possible readings that are more concerned with the physical status of the subject.

self. While my discussion focuses on cases of mistaken or uncertain sex, the chapter also demonstrates that the temporal order reinforced through narrative constructions of sexual development affected individuals across the borders of present-day identity categories. Following a general discussion of the case history in the context of German and English sexology, the chapter concludes with its own ‘case study’ of the memoirs of Karl M.[artha] Baer.

Defining the Case History

To begin, it is necessary to point out that there is no consensus on what counts as an autobiographical case history. If there is a common denominator, it is that autobiographical case histories draw on empirical material in the form of personal narratives of lived experience, and embed them into a theoretical or conceptual framework. The ways in which this conflation of autobiographical, biographical and scientific discourse was achieved, however, differ widely. Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Magnus Hirschfeld would use verbatim quotations of varying length from letters sent by patients and anonymous admirers of their work. They would also draw on notes taken during face-to-face patient interviews. While some of their case histories contain paraphrased first-person narratives and others combine paraphrased and verbatim quotations, many are presented entirely in the first-person. Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds’ first edition of *Sexual Inversion* includes thirty-one case histories, the majority of which comprise autobiographical materials. There is no uniformity with regard to the style or tone of the narratives, even though it is possible to identify recurrent themes and structures.

One of the main difficulties when dealing with case histories is to understand the degree of mediation and to estimate the authenticity of autobiographical accounts. Krafft-Ebing and Hirschfeld were both practising doctors and would therefore interact directly with patients, recording their speech in writing, but also examining their physical appearance. Ellis and Symonds, on the other hand, were dependent on written accounts by friends and acquaintances, mostly from Symonds’ or, to a lesser degree, Edith Ellis’ social circles. The degree to which the patients were influenced by suggestion in interviews is impossible to determine in hindsight.

It is also often difficult to fully understand how the individual's familiarity with sexological discourse might have impacted the way in which he or she constructed his or her own narrative.

The question of mediation is central when it comes to determining how to read and evaluate the content of autobiographical case histories. In fact, the answer to the question decides whether or not it is possible to read these texts as autobiographies in the first place. If we agree that case histories are overdetermined by the framing sexological context, the autobiographical element might be all but lost. This devaluation of the autobiographical quality of case histories is in line with the Foucaultian reading of the case history as a repressive form of enforced confession. According to Foucault, nineteenth-century *scientia sexualis* effectively secularised confession. Through a combination of confession and examination, confession was adopted by science as one of its most important means of control. If religious confession favoured the incorporeal, the new sexual confessions also sought to manipulate the body as well as its desires and pleasures (Neuman 415). Foucault describes confession as a form of enforced discipline; the truth gained through confession has a heavy price, as "its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power" (*History* 60). The confessant cannot speak for himself or herself, but is dependent on the confessor's acknowledgement. In Foucault's words:

The truth did not reside solely in the subject who, by confessing, would reveal it wholly formed. It was constituted in two stages: present but incomplete, blind to itself, in the one who spoke, it could only reach completion in the one who assimilated and recorded it. It was the latter's function to verify this obscure truth: the revelation of confession had to be coupled with the decipherment of what it said. (*History* 66)

Truth is not formed in the subject, but conferred by the confessor. Strictly speaking, at the time of utterance, the confessant is only a subject-to-be, as his or her very recognition as a subject is at stake. As the emphasis lies on the external validation of the subject's speech rather than his or her self-reflexive stance, autobiographical readings of confession became problematic. Taking up Foucault's figuration of confession as a means of control and discipline, many critics have drawn attention to the repressive function of the case history. According to Angus McLaren, for instance, "sexologists ... demanded confessions from their clients [and] erupted into the print 'the speaking pervert'" (87). Writing about Krafft-Ebing's case histories of

female inverts, Marylynne Diggs argues that the autobiographical accounts were “obsessively framed” and paraphrased, which leads her to conclude that they do not count as autobiographies ‘proper’ (136). Because of the overwhelming impact of the sexological framework, the authenticity of self-expression is deemed to be lacking.

What is problematic about such statements is that there is no means of measuring this alleged authenticity. The equation of autobiographical expression with direct speech (rather than reported speech) is misleading, as first-person narrative does not automatically equal freedom from discursive norms. Speaking in the first person does not mean that the subject is placed outside of sexological discourse or any discourse for that matter. Conversely, it is naive to assume that indirect speech, the sexologists’ paraphrasing of patients’ words, always implies substantial falsification. Rather than claim that the sexologist is speaking *for* the patient, it is possible to argue that he is speaking *with* or *through* the patient. After all, the very discipline of sexology was shaped by the interaction with the subjects of the case histories, who actively contributed to the formation of the discourse in which they were implicated. In Harry Oosterhuis’ words, “[s]exual categories and identities were not only scientific inventions and imposed from above by the power of organized medical opinion” (212). Oosterhuis further suggests that the autobiographical case history should be seen as part of a cultural movement towards introspection and self-expression that precedes and partially constitutes sexological discourse. This means that sexology did not single-handedly produce or enforce the desire to speak about the sexual self, but that the autobiographical case history should also be seen as the product of a more general cultural preoccupation with self-analysis. Key characteristics of the case history such as the articulation of individual difference, the gulf between public and private self, and the interest in feelings and desires as constitutive elements of the self, are not sexological inventions, but central elements of the wider project of modern autobiography (Oosterhuis 215-230).

Interestingly, the debate regarding the value of case histories and their authenticity is anticipated in sexological discourse itself. The correspondence between Ellis and Symonds reveals that Symonds established contact to other inverts and thus procured autobiographical material, but it was Ellis who insisted on the

inclusion of case histories in the book.³⁴ On 9 February 1893, Ellis writes to Symonds:

I should be glad to see the autobiographies you mention. I do not think I at all agree with you that this kind of literature is of no interest. Autobiographies of this kind from England have not been published, & we have no right to assume that they are similar to the Continental. I don't think you can have too many documents of this kind. At the same time it is certainly true that a few carefully detailed are of much greater value than a large number of vague & fragmented character. (n. pag.)

In response, Symonds articulates his concerns regarding the inclusion of case histories as follows:

I am rather afraid that the diffusion of books by Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, & others, may tend to the formation of a kind of "fixed style" in these confessions. It is important then to base conclusions upon obviously candid & uninspired records. You will observe my method in eliciting these confessions. I framed a set of questions upon the points which seemed to me of most importance after a study of Ulrichs & Krafft-Ebing. (18 February 1893; n. pag.)

Symonds' remarks appear self-contradictory. On the one hand, he is concerned that Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing's publications might falsify autobiographical accounts by producing a 'fixed style' (Crozier, "Introduction" 49). On the other hand, Symonds reports that he has put together a questionnaire based on both authors' publications to elicit useful responses from correspondents.⁵ It appears as if Symonds is concerned only with the intertextual influence between case histories, but not so much with the suggestive force of the framing sexological writings that have fed into the questionnaire he has devised.

The difficulties that arise here do not only point to the way in which sexology framed the personal narratives it authorised, but also reveal the very impossibility of authentic autobiographical writing if authenticity is understood as complete freedom from external influence. It is one of the many paradoxes of all autobiography that the writer has to draw on a recognisable public language and an established set of conventions to describe a private self that is understood as separate from the public

³ I am drawing on my own transcripts obtained during a visit to the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRC). Parts of the otherwise unpublished correspondence between Ellis, Symonds and Carpenter have recently been published by Crozier ("Introduction").

⁴ In his letters to Ellis, we can see that Symonds was reluctant to publish some of the autobiographical material he had collected, because of its private nature.

⁵ The questionnaire Symonds used is lost (Crozier, "Introduction" 49).

sphere. As all forms of autobiographical expression are mediated through historical, social and cultural norms that give shape to narratives of the self, it does not make sense to dismiss the autobiographical dimension of case histories on the ground that they reflect external conventions or perpetuate patterns that seem to underlie other autobiographical case histories.

This does not mean that one should not pay attention to the way sexology shaped personal narratives, but that this external influence has to be read in more complex ways other than as falsifying suggestion. In the third edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis himself comments on this matter when he defends the case histories he is using against the claim that they are mere imitations or formulaic expressions. Writing in 1915, Ellis is reacting against psychoanalytic claims directed against the validity of sexological case histories, which were not recorded in accordance with psychoanalytic protocol.⁶ Ellis asserts that he has no doubt that

inverts have frequently been stimulated to set down the narrative of their own experiences through reading those written by others. But the stimulation has, as often as not, lain in the fact that their own experiences have seemed different, not that they have seemed identical. The histories that they read only serve as models in the sense that they indicate the points on which information is desired. I have often been able to verify this influence, which would in any case seem to be fairly obvious. (3rd ed. 90)

Ellis does not deny the intertextual dimension of autobiographical case histories, but he reinterprets it as an expression of critical consciousness. He asserts that subjects often engaged productively with previous writings so as to assert the difference of their experiences. For him, the only overlap regards the *kind* of information included, but not the *presentation* itself. As the following discussion shows, case histories did share narrative patterns; however, Ellis' positive re-evaluation of intertextuality is relevant nonetheless. Prosser, for instance, has argued that the intertextual dimension of autobiographical case histories can be read as a means of shaping communal forms of expression that are set apart from sexological master-narratives (*Skins* 149-150). Paying more attention to the formative influence of first-person narratives on the emerging discipline of sexology and doing justice to the creative and productive

⁶ See Crozier for a discussion of the complex relationship between Ellis and Freud. Crozier pays particular attention to the 1915 edition of *Sexual Inversion* in which Ellis was evidently keen to defend sexology against the increasingly influential discipline of psychoanalysis ("Prisoners").

intertextuality of the genre opens up the possibility of reading case histories as autobiography.

Writing the Self, Writing the Body

Another argument in favour of an autobiographical reading of case histories dealing with individuals of uncertain sex is the constitutive impact of narrative on the medical, social and legal status of the subject. Looking at these texts, we see again and again that the patient's voice was instrumental in determining the subject's otherwise uncertain sex. The common term pseudo-hermaphroditism points to the fact that bodily appearance could belie an inner truth. The late nineteenth-century focus on the gonads, which theoretically emerged as the decisive sex-determining criterion, often led to the problem of not being able to determine the sex of the living patient, which was not readily visible when examining the outside of the body. Because the gonads were located on the – as yet – impenetrable inside, the patient's voice emerged as a crucial tool in the discovery of the interior truth of sex.⁷ Through narrative self-representation, the subject could influence the social, cultural and legal meanings of his or her body and align them with his or her inner identity. This can be seen as an expression of the more general autobiographical promise of reconciling the external and internal, the objective and subjective, the physical and the psychological. In this sense, case histories dealing with patients of uncertain sex can be said to literalise the autobiographical gesture of wishing to align inner and outer self through narrative mediation.

The signifying power of narrative must be understood as part of a specific moment in the history of sexology in which the relation between mind and body was undergoing significant changes. As I have pointed out in my introduction, sexological concepts like sexual inversion or sexual intermediacy are often bewildering, as they comprise a multitude of physical and psychological attributes. Hirschfeld clearly differentiates between primary and secondary sexual characteristics, the sex drive and other emotional characteristics (*Transvestites* 219). However, importantly, these categories are also understood as part of a single

⁷ According to Dreger, it was only in 1915 that new surgical technologies (laparotomies and biopsies) made it possible to confirm testes in living women and ovaries in living men (159).

complex of sexual intermediacy, in which the distinctions are blurred. To complicate matters even further, one can identify two opposing currents of development regarding the mind-body relation at the turn of the century. On the one hand, we can trace the movement away from somatic models of explanations and towards psychological understandings of sexual inversion. This strand of development would ultimately culminate in the psychoanalytic focus on sexual identification and object choice. On the other hand, we see an insistence on physical readings of inversion that were central to sexology. The concept of hermaphroditism was of primary importance in this context, as it allowed for psychological sensations, including sexual preference or gender identity, to be understood as phenomena that are analogous to visual physical characteristics (Herrn 55). Terms like ‘psychical hermaphroditism’ represent the desire to substantiate sexuality by presenting it as a congenital phenomenon that shares the same etiological origins as physical hermaphroditism.⁸

The two opposing trends – the move towards psychological explanations and the parallel insistence on material readings of inversion – come to affect the narrative construction of sex through autobiographical writing. To open up the possibility of taking patient narrative into consideration when signifying physical sex, it was necessary to move away from the gonads as the only objective sex-determining criterion. This allowed sexologists to view sexuality as a multifaceted complex of physical characteristics, character traits, and sexual desires. Gertje Mak has traced the emergence of the interest in “sex-gender consciousness” – rather than gonadal truth – in medical discourses on hermaphroditism (“Microscope” 69). While the debate is made explicit in the first decade of the twentieth century, Mak shows that it originates in the second half of the nineteenth century and thus occurred earlier than historians like Alice Dreger have previously assumed.⁹ In the twelfth edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in 1903 in German, Krafft-Ebing explicitly defies the gonadal criterion, when he maintains that “[t]he form of the sexual glands is ... not the qualifying element of sex-determination, but we must look rather to

⁸ Krafft-Ebing, for instance, uses the term to describe a form of bisexuality in which homosexual feelings dominate, but heterosexual desire is felt sporadically (7th ed. 230).

⁹ Dreger argues that the age of gonads ends in 1915. This is obviously not true as writers like Krafft-Ebing explicitly questioned the gonadal criteria at least ten years earlier (cf. Klöppel 173).

sexual sensations and the sexual instinct” (30). Moving away from physical ‘truths’ that could, at least in theory, be verified objectively, this implied a turn towards the subject’s consciousness.

Krafft-Ebing’s unpublished case history of Albert Welk, recorded a decade earlier in December 1894, shows that he had distanced himself from a strict gonadal understanding of sex much earlier.¹⁰ The case study also provides an interesting insight into the way physical and psychological information was used side by side in a bid to ascertain the patient’s sex. Albert Welk is Krafft-Ebing’s only known case of pseudohermaphroditism. 26-year-old Welk had been hospitalised due to severe mental problems, which Krafft-Ebing relates to his underdeveloped genitals. He suffered from mood shifts and paranoia and was prone to erratic behaviour and suicidal thoughts. Krafft-Ebing begins the case with a long description of Welk’s ‘status praesens’, paying close attention to Welk’s inner life, for instance, by recording his erotic dreams and childhood fears. The fact that the description of Welk’s psychological constitution is much longer than the concluding remarks regarding his ‘status somaticus’ shows Krafft-Ebing’s tendency to favour psychological rather than physiological interpretations of his patients’ condition.

In keeping with Welk’s self-understanding, the patient is unequivocally presented as a man with malformed genitals in the first four and a half pages of the case history. In the concluding comments on Welk’s physical appearance, however, Krafft-Ebing suddenly describes his patient’s wide pelvis, fatty mons veneris and lack of body hair. He includes two separate references to Welk’s small, infantile penis and emphasises four times that there is no evidence of testicles. The focus on the *absent* testicles is surprising, as Krafft-Ebing had reported in the first part of the case history that Welk insisted on the removal of his testicles, exclaiming, “Die Hoden muessen heraus, so kann man nicht leben” ‘The testicles have to be taken out, it is not possible to live like this’ (my translation; n. pag.). Krafft-Ebing does not confirm the absence of Welk’s testicles, but repeatedly points out that he could not ascertain their existence. The fact that the uncertainty regarding Welk’s testicles does not keep Krafft-Ebing from asserting that his patient is a man shows that sexual difference was not equated with gonadal truth. Instead, it could be derived from what

¹⁰ I am grateful to Oosterhuis for making me aware of the existence of this case study, which is held by the Wellcome Library.

Krafft-Ebing referred to as the subject's 'psycho-sexual constitution'. Here, the patient's sense of his or her own sex takes precedence over the proof of gonadal tissue. This concentration on patients' inner sensations rather than anatomical or physiological facts also characterises Krafft-Ebing's other case histories (Oosterhuis 59). As if to further underline Welk's masculinity, Krafft-Ebing ends the case study with a coda in which he mentions an erotic letter Welk wrote to a woman named Kathi. Heterosexual desire comes to reinforce Welk's masculinity, which is established despite the lack of gonadal evidence.

Welk's case history indicates a shift away from objective physical truths and towards inner experience, which was expressed in narratives of the self. Prosser argues that the privileged position of narrative, which was seen as more reliable than the patient's body, allowed for the "material body [to be viewed] as a mistake" and thus prefigured the "split between sex and gender, between outer body and inner identity" (*Skins* 143). While this is true, the distinction between body and mind is only anticipated at the turn of the century. Had it been complete, the connection between mind, narrative and body would have ceased to exist and it would have been impossible to justify projecting narrative meanings onto the body, thus substantialising the subject's self-perception. In Welk's case history, patient narrative can still determine the meaning of the body. The beginning of the twentieth century was a period of transition during which narrative could still signify the body while the body did not overdetermine the meaning of the patient's voice.

Literal Readings: Psychoanalysis, Endocrinology and Sexology

After Krafft-Ebing, Prosser and Oosterhuis maintain, we witness the move away from the signifying function of narrative. Mak concurs and argues that the emergence of 'sex-gender consciousness' in narrative is simultaneous with its becoming "an *object* of medical investigation, the basis of a field in which medicine began to claim professional competence" ("Microscope" 68; her emphasis). At the beginning of the twentieth century, two new disciplines would claim authority over the mind-body relation: psychoanalysis and endocrinology.

The case history was as foundational to the discipline of psychoanalysis as it was for sexology. Like the sexologists, Freud was concerned with the relationship between body and mind, which was mediated through narrative. Freud and Breuer describe how psychological problems would manifest themselves on the body of their hysterical patients. In fact, the very effectiveness of psychoanalytical treatment was measured against the persistence or disappearance of these symptoms (2: 4). While psychoanalysis maintained an interest in the relation between narrative construction and physical effect, Prosser has argued that psychoanalysis led to a lack of *literal* readings of patients' voices that would allow the autobiographical narrative to determine the meaning of the body (*Skins* 152). To illustrate this claim, he draws attention to Daniel Paul Schreber, whom he describes as Freud's "most overtly transgendered case" (151). Schreber's remarkable *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, first published in German in 1903, provided the basis for Freud's case study, written in 1911. As part of his psychosis, Schreber fantasised about turning into a woman and repopulating the world after being impregnated by god. Freud reads Schreber's feeling of being transformed into a woman metaphorically as an expression of his homosexuality, an explanation Freud arrives at by focusing on Schreber's allegedly disturbed relationship with his father.¹¹ Prosser, on the other hand, classifies Schreber as a proto-transsexual subject and argues that Freud metaphorically displaces Schreber's cross-gender identification. Ultimately, Schreber's memoirs shatter the frame of both a homosexual and a transsexual reading, as we get the sense that sexual identification and orientation constitute only a comparatively insignificant part of Schreber's overall crisis of the self.¹² However, Prosser is right in showing that Freud tends to treat cross-gender desire metaphorically, so that the feeling of being a member of the opposite sex can no longer signify the body, but comes to stand in for sexual object choice.

In contrast to psychoanalysis, Oosterhuis maintains that endocrinology "(re)confirmed the belief in the biological basis of sexuality and cut off the world of lived experience from the world of medical science" (280). Psychoanalysis focused on the psyche and narrative, but dematerialised the body; endocrinology focused on

¹¹ Freud's Oedipal reading of the Schreber case has been problematised (Sulaway, "Case" 252-255).

¹² Santner, for instance, situates Schreber very productively in the wider cultural and political context of fin-de-siècle Germany rather than focusing exclusively on questions of sexual dissidence.

the body, but ignored the psyche and narrative. Accordingly, neither model allowed for a mediating impact of narrative as a means of signifying the body through narrative. In the sexological context, however, the autobiographical case study continued to thrive even after endocrinological models, which became available at the beginning of the twentieth century, had been endorsed. Endocrinology offered sexologists the proof of a congenital basis of homosexuality, but the interest in personal narratives persisted. Prosser argues that Ellis was keen to affirm a congenital basis of homosexuality, but continued to be interested in personal accounts of inversion (*Skins* 151). Indeed, the third edition of *Sexual Inversion*, first published in 1915 when endocrinological influence was strongly felt, contained a revised and extended chapter of autobiographical case studies. In the German context, Hirschfeld, who was equally invested in congenital explanations of homosexuality, amassed his extensive collection of autobiographical case studies in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

That sexologists, who were interested in proving the physical basis of inversion, would continue to draw on patient accounts might strike us as odd given that autobiographical narrative seems to lend itself more readily to the psychoanalytic project. But endocrinology justified the continued use of patient narratives, as it promised to reconcile the division between mind and body.¹³ The endocrinological body encompassed not only primary, but also secondary sexual characteristics as well as sexual orientation and even certain forms of behaviour, speech or thoughts that could be read as gendered (Sengoopta, *Secret* 3). According to Bernice Hausman,

physical and psychological sex characteristics were perceived to coincide, providing evidence of an assumption that the endocrine system regulated the continuity of 'femininity' or 'masculinity' across the psyche-soma boundary. (38)

While the endocrinological model did favour a purely physical reading of the body, it also offered a range of possibilities for sexologists like Hirschfeld, who quickly embraced endocrinology because it promised to synthesise the different strands of

¹³ Hirschfeld believed that endocrine glands influenced both body and mind via the brain. He argued that differences in psychosexual orientation were reflected in distinct brain centres, which reacted differently to chemical stimuli produced by endocrine glands (Wolff 128). This shows that endocrinology served to establish a connection between the psychological and physiological constitution of the individual.

sexual intermediacy on the grounds of biology as opposed to psychology.¹⁴ Instead of constituting the break between literal and figurative readings, in Hirschfeld's hands, endocrinology justified literal readings of patient narratives by presenting an inclusive model of human sexuality. Hirschfeld regularly dealt with patients who approached him because they wished to change or rectify their sexual status. Endocrinology allowed Hirschfeld to focus on a variety of sexual characteristics other than primary sexual organs. This was important because the unreliability of secondary sex characteristics was widely acknowledged at the time and there was considerable debate regarding the possibility of assigning sex on the basis of secondary sexual and psychological sex characteristics. Hirschfeld used the model of the endocrinological body to open up a range of reading possibilities that would also allow the subject to help determine the meaning of his or her body through narrative.

The case of Amanda/Amandus B.[alitzki] provides a striking example of Hirschfeld's literal reading of patient narratives.¹⁵ The case is introduced as a preliminary stage of hermaphroditism in Hirschfeld's *Sexualpathologie* (2: 21-23). Amanda had approached Hirschfeld because of her desire to wear male clothing when she was 24 years old. At the time, she had obtained the legal rights to wear male dress in public and had lived in the social role of a man ever since. Three years later, in 1917, she visited Hirschfeld again, as she wanted to legally change her name. Hirschfeld draws on Amanda's self-narrative to describe her 'boyish' childhood and her desire to wear male clothes, manifested early on in childhood. On the basis of Amanda/Amandus' personal history, Hirschfeld then continues to describe her primary and secondary sexual organs. The language he uses is uncharacteristically vague. While he asserts that the external genitals are of an "überwiegend weiblich anmutenden Erscheinung" 'more female appearance', he describes a fold of skin next to the clitoris, which he compares to a penis, as it can become erect (22; my translation). To prove his point, he includes an extreme close-

¹⁴ The impact of endocrinology on psychoanalysis is sometimes underestimated. Freud was interested in endocrinological research and repeatedly gestured towards a possible chemical explanation that would comprise both biological and psychological factors (7: n.146-147). He also underwent the infamous Steinach operation in a bid to cure his cancer (Sengoopta, *Secret* 87).

¹⁵ Herrn presents a more detailed discussion of Hirschfeld's medical protocol in cases of allegedly uncertain sex. He points out that the treatment of Amanda/Amandus is representative of Hirschfeld's general approach (69).

up shot of Amanda's genitals (Fig. 1). The photograph is meant to provide factual evidence, but

Hermaphroditische Vorstufe

Tafel I.

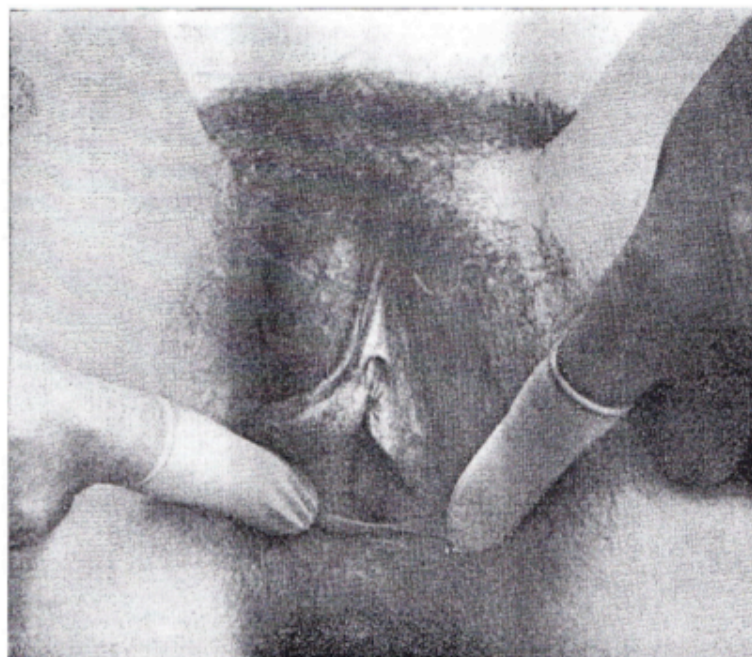
1

2

3



4



Der Fall ist eingehend im Text Seite 21 u. ff. beschrieben. Die oberen Aufnahmen stellen die Patientin in ihrer früheren weiblichen und jetzigen männlichen Tracht dar. Man beachte den Gesichtsausdruck, welcher gut die Verschiedenheit der Stimmung wiedergibt. Das untere Bild zeigt ihre äußeren Geschlechtsorgane, deren Hauptmerkmal äußere Überentwicklung (Hyperplasie) und innere Unterentwicklung (Hypoplasie) ist.

Fig. 1. Medical photographs of Amanda/Amandus B. from Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexualpathologie* (Berlin: Marcus and Webers, 1922; plate 1).

looking at the picture, we have difficulty finding the mysterious penis-like fold Hirschfeld describes. In fact, Amanda/Amandus' genitals do not seem to show any obvious signs of malformation. The 'real' story is not provided by the photograph of the genitals, but by the three pictures above, where we see Amanda/Amandus as a woman, naked, and as a man. Here, clothing and posture determine the meaning of the body. Even in the middle picture, where Amanda/Amandus is naked, the confident posture and lack of apparent shame can be read as an expression of masculinity within the gendered ideology of the time. Sexual truth does not lie in factual objectivity, but in self-presentation.

In the accompanying case study, Hirschfeld himself admits that the patient "ist psychisch, im Gegensatz zu seiner in vielen Stücken überwiegend weiblich anmutenden Erscheinung ausgesprochen viril" 'is more virile psychologically, in contrast to his appearance, which is, in many parts, seemingly more female' (my translation; 22). To emphasise his point, Hirschfeld concludes with a description of Amanda/Amandus' masculine character traits: a desire for independence, hatred of jewellery and love of smoking. Hirschfeld even lists the contents of Amanda/Amandus' pockets, which includes matches, a cigarette case, a knife and a notebook. Most importantly, Hirschfeld draws attention to the patient's unfaltering desire for women, which further underlines his masculinity. Hirschfeld concludes that Amanda should be granted the wish to change her name and be officially recognised as Amandus.

As Rainer Herrn has argued, Hirschfeld used the same methods of sex assignment for individuals that would nowadays be classified separately as transsexuals or intersexuals.¹⁶ In the case of Amanda/Amandus, present-day terminology fails, as Hirschfeld is strikingly unconcerned with the determination of what we would recognise as his patient's 'true' sex today. What is more important than the question of whether or not Amanda/Amandus was intersexual or transsexual, is that sexual intermediacy emerges as a 'reading' – or, more aptly, a 'listening' effect. Literal readings of patient narrative did persist in the era of

¹⁶ See also Herrn's discussion of the case of Katharina T. (66-70).

endocrinology and psychoanalysis. Hirschfeld constructed analogies between mind and body, and he would actively search for and possibly even invent signs of physical difference to justify his own as well as his patients' claims. Instead of reducing the subject's agency, endocrinology could therefore also provide a model that served to increase it. The high degree of popularisation of endocrinological discourse contributed to this effect. According to Hausman, endocrinology quickly became part of public knowledge and thus produced "a situation in which individuals [could] name themselves as the appropriate subjects of particular medical interventions, and thereby participate in the construction of themselves as patients" (23).

At the same time, it is important to take seriously Mak's objection that consciousness soon came to be seen as another part of medical authority. Indeed, Hirschfeld did not efface himself or his own authority, as he continued to interpret his patients' narratives and bodies and thus acted as a decisive mediator between self-understanding and bodily signification. The gloved fingers in the photograph, which expose Amanda/Amandus' genitals to the camera, remind us of the continued presence of sexological authority, which filtered and validated self-expression. If Hirschfeld's judgment tended to be in agreement with his patients' wishes regarding his or her 'real' sex, this is not only a sign of Hirschfeld's willingness to 'listen', but also points to his wish to prove a connection between consciousness and body. As has been argued above, this link established the biological basis of sexual intermediacy and, in turn, helped to disprove rivalling psychoanalytic readings that reduced cross-gender desire to a metaphor and viewed homosexuality as an acquired rather than congenital phenomenon. Instead of rejecting the case study in the wake of Freud's psychologisation of homosexuality, Hirschfeld attempted to instrumentalise patient narratives as part of his own project.

The Turning Point

Looking at the photograph series of Amanda/Amandus, we see that the three pictures at the top of the page are numbered. This means that the viewer is invited to read them sequentially, as a form of narrative, leading away from a female self of the past

towards the discovery of a male self in the present. The picture in the middle, where Amanda/Amandus is naked, anticipates the male self of the future, but is also, clearly, still female and thus constitutes a ‘turning point’ in the developmental sequence presented. Here, Amanda/Amandus’ sex change is embedded in a narrative of sexual development that provides a framework within which her masculinity becomes legible.

The narrative production of sex was liberating, as it allowed for sex to change over the course of time. But as we shall see, narrative is also governmental in a restrictive sense, placing certain limitations on patient speech, most importantly, by demanding that it correspond with sexology’s own narratives of sexual development. From the start, sexology was preoccupied with the timing of sexual development. According to Annamarie Jagose, the “production of sexuality as a sequential effect” was sexology’s “definitional project” (*Inconsequence* 24). This is an important insight, as it is sometimes assumed that the sexological belief in the congenital basis of inversion resulted in a lack of interest in developmental questions, which lay at the heart of Freud’s non-congenital model of homosexuality. However, as Jagose has shown, sexology and psychoanalysis shared a preoccupation with the temporal ordering of sexuality through narrative. To illustrate how time operated in sexological discourse, we can focus on the dominant trope of the turning point.¹⁷ In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis describes inversion as “an inborn impulse, developing about the time of puberty” (201). Here, inversion is both always already present and yet delayed until a future moment of expression. The assumed latency of sexuality helped to facilitate the narrative construction of the sexual self, as sexuality came to be seen as an ongoing process. The growing interest in internal secretions and their impact on the organism over the course of the individual’s life contributed to the fascination with an intrinsic connection between the complex interplay of human sexuality and temporality. As the gonads ceased to be seen as static determinants of sex, they were refigured as sex glands that produced sex *over time*.

¹⁷ In 1916, Steinach coined the term ‘puberty glands’ to refer to the interstitial cells responsible for internal secretions affecting both physical and psychological development (Sengoopta, *Secret* 160). However, sexologists had been concerned with the mental and physical changes that occurred during puberty much earlier.

However, sexual development was not aimless, as puberty emerged as the decisive moment in which the truth of the self would be revealed.¹⁸ With regard to cases of uncertain sex, the awakening of sexual instinct during puberty often contributed to the desire to change sex. In addition, alterations in hormonal production would sometimes lead to unexpected physical developments of virilisation or feminisation that called into question the individual's assigned sex. The construction of puberty as turning point also facilitated the emergence of the speaking subject. Sexologists began to realise that there might be cases in which sex determination had to be suspended until the individual had reached puberty and the secondary sex characteristics and sexual instinct had developed. By the time the gonads had thus 'expressed' themselves, the patient had also reached a level of maturity that allowed him or her to speak for himself or herself.

To allow for this suspense of sex determination, Hirschfeld argued that individuals that were born with ambiguous genitalia should be allowed to choose their own sex at the age of eighteen. Franz Ludwig von Neugebauer, one of the most eminent experts on hermaphroditism in the early twentieth century, shared Hirschfeld's opinion. He proposed that when confronted with "a new-born child of doubtful sex it is better to reserve one's decision than to risk a mistake" (244). Hirschfeld, on the other hand, preferred the more pragmatic option of assigning a 'strategic sex' both for the sake of the child and the sake of the parents. In a case where no decision regarding the child's sex could be made on a scientific basis, he advised the parents to register their son as Paul Martin, but add Paula Martha in brackets to the birth certificate (*Sexualpathologie* 2: 71). Hirschfeld justified this suspense of judgment by arguing that the body needed time to mature so as to reveal its glandular secrets. This emphasis on a freedom of development formed part of Hirschfeld's general liberatory project. Hirschfeld believed that society would be best served by

granting the greatest possible freedom to the play of forces. ... The self-regulation of nature provides the best guarantee for the well-being of the individual as well as of the whole. At least, it is far more reliable than artificial rules and prohibitions imposed by human beings. ("Epilogue" 111)

¹⁸ I am using the term 'puberty' rather than 'adolescence' to point to the tension between physiological changes that cannot yet be regulated hormonally in the early twentieth century, and discursive constructions of human development.

Hirschfeld's views on sexual development appear dynamic, but the 'free play of forces' has to be understood within a rigid temporal framework that anticipates a moment of maturity. Puberty enables the 'free play of forces', but it also takes on the burden of decision. For James Kincaid, puberty is monstrous, "an awesome catastrophe", precisely because it allows for latency and suspense, but in doing so "take[s] on the responsibility for releasing all that pent-up pressure" (125). The delay of sexual difference in childhood is possible only because the period is temporally limited. Registering the child as both Paul and Paula, sex determination is delayed, but only in anticipation of a future moment of certainty, a turning point that will reveal sexual truth. What becomes apparent here is a more fundamental problem with Hirschfeld's model of sexual intermediacy. While affirming a multiplicity of sexual identities, Hirschfeld never successfully challenged the categories of masculinity and femininity (Sengoopta, *Secret* n.251-252). This translates into the fact that the subject has to choose to be either male or female in puberty. The 'free play of forces' Hirschfeld affirmed was possible only under the condition of an anticipated goal of development that replaces change and development with permanence and stability.

The 'monstrous' quality of puberty and the anxieties it produced are expressed in Neugebauer's description of the moment of sex discovery in a case of uncertain sex:

In the majority of cases the true sex, even when indeterminate at birth, declares itself spontaneously at puberty. ... When about 16 the young person notices erections of the clitoris, and complains to her mother of emissions of viscous fluid. The voice changes, and the mother wonders that the menses do not appear ... All in contact with the youth are struck by the appearance presented, which is rather that of a boy disguised in petticoats than that of a real girl. The parents for many years have had doubts as to the sex of their child, and now ... at last recognise the error of sex. Or under other circumstances, unbalanced by the effect of voluptuous dreams, the youth may ... finally attempt sexual intercourse as a woman; and so, the sexual instinct ... may cause the disclosure of the error of sex. Or again, all doubt may be dissipated by a female friend already versed in sexual life, or by a doctor consulted by the girl herself, or by the mother, in order to know why at the age of 18 the catamenia have not appeared, and whether the girl is fit to marry and bear children, &c. Often enough the doctor ... by the aid of the microscope will be able to decide whether the fluid ejaculated is semen with or without spermatozoa, or otherwise. (242-243)

Neugebauer lists all the possible ways in which the youth can go astray only to confirm that all of these detours ultimately lead to the recognition of a singular, true sex. A couple of sentences later, however, Neugebauer adds: “But though in the majority of cases the true sex can be determined at puberty, in a certain number the task before the medical man is a much more difficult one” (242). This aside is telling in that it indicates that the unruly, overproductive and leaky pubescent body might not so easily be contained within a safely circumscribed temporal period. Puberty as a temporal framework might be prone to leakage itself. The considerable length of Neugebauer’s quotation as well as the searching tone of his description, which is anything but affirmative, undermine the faith in puberty Neugebauer is trying to convey. Rather than providing a single moment of certainty, puberty has to accommodate a bewildering contingency and ultimately opens up the possibility that this transitional phase will never come to an end. As turning point, puberty can confirm an underlying or latent truth that has been there all along at the same time as it can destroy all sense of coherence.

Coherence, Health, Literariness

If sexological narratives of sexual development were undercut by a potentially disruptive turning point, how did this affect the way in which subjects came to present themselves in personal narratives? To begin, it is important to point out that the turning point is a central trope in autobiographical tradition from Augustine to the Romantics and beyond. According to Patrick Riley, the turning point in autobiographical discourse “provides an anchor and source of intelligibility for autobiographical narrative, [but] also serves to disrupt any stable self-definition” (3). Writing about Krafft-Ebing’s cases of homosexual patients, Oosterhuis maintains that case histories tend to consist of teleological narratives culminating in the discovery and establishment of the true self. Even though self-knowledge is only obtained later in life, usually during puberty, it is often implied that this self “had always been there but was hidden and had to be traced” (225). Latency here comes to motivate the narrative drive towards the turning point, which is always already anticipated. As a result, narrative continuity is achieved even in the face of

disruption. In cases of uncertain sex, the unsettling quality of the turning point is more prominent than in cases of homosexuality as the discovery of the ‘new’ sex often involved medical intervention and a change of legal and social status. Nevertheless, the same narrative strategies of suspense and anticipation are used in order to incorporate the turning point into a continuous narrative.

What is at stake in the production of narrative continuity is the loss of sexual diversity: a period of latency is overcome in favour of a single true sex, or a stable homosexual identity, that is, furthermore, retrospectively projected onto the past. In his introduction to the memoirs of Barbin, Foucault blames medical authorities for forcing “young people ... [to] recall that every one of you has a sex, a true sex” (x). While it is true that sexological discourse failed to deconstruct sexual dimorphisms and often maintained binary understandings of heterosexuality and homosexuality, we also need to question what other purposes narrative continuity served. Because of their political and humanist agenda, Ellis and, especially, Hirschfeld were keen to oppose degenerative understandings of homosexuality and sexual intermediacy more generally. For Ellis, the case histories served this purpose by proving the health of the invert. Ellis emphasises that “inverts seem to find the highest degree of success and reputation” in the field of literature (*Sexual Inversion* 3rd ed. 341). Similarly, Hirschfeld describes transvestites as “intelligent, conscientious people who have diverse interests and a broad education” (*Transvestites* 141). He explains that this intelligence “is also seen in their descriptions, which I reproduced here verbatim in part to give an image of their intellectual abilities beside the depiction of their emotional life” (*Transvestites* 141). Pointing to the ‘intellectual abilities’ of the subjects of their case histories, Ellis and Hirschfeld tried to oppose possible politically and ethically counterproductive interpretations of their work. If their efforts were to be successful, they had to show that the sexually intermediate subject was physically different yet at the same time not morbidly degenerate. Because degenerative models conflated physical and intellectual development, intelligence, the very ability to structure and present thoughts coherently and sensibly, could be read as a sign of physical and mental health. Letters exchanged between Carpenter and Ellis in the 1890s show that both sexologists were aware of this important apologetic function of the case study (Crozier, “Introduction” 54-55). Following the

first publication of the English edition of the book, Carpenter stresses in a letter to Ellis:

I am so glad it is out. ... It is (I think) the best scientific treatment of the subject wh. I have seen. And the character of yr cases (their healthiness & c.) gives a special value to the book. I now feel that the subject has got a hearing & an expression in England. (28 November 1897; n. pag.)

In this letters, Carpenter also criticises Albert Moll and Krafft-Ebing, because of the lack of healthy and eloquent patient narratives in their works, and he encourages Ellis to include a case history of Walt Whitman to prove that inverts could provide ‘well-written’ and ‘healthy’ narratives.

One of the connections between sexology and psychoanalysis is that both disciplines draw on a similar understanding of health as related to coherent narrative. According to Stephen Marcus, Freud believed that

a coherent story is in some manner connected with mental health ... On this reading, human life is, ideally, a connected and coherent story, with all the details in explanatory place, and with everything (or as close to everything as is practically possible) accounted for, in its proper causal or other sequence. And inversely, illness amounts at least in part to suffering from an incoherent story or an inadequate narrative account for oneself. (“Dora” 61)

If Freud did believe in the ideal of a coherent narrative, he was also clearly aware of the fact that narrative coherence could only remain a laboriously constructed fiction. To be sure, Freud did not expect his patients to narrate their lives in a coherent fashion. In the case history of Dora, he comments on a female patient who delivered a story that “came out perfectly clearly and connectedly in spite of the remarkable events it dealt with” (7: n.17). Freud concluded that the woman was healthy and did not need psychoanalytic treatment. In contrast to Ellis and Hirschfeld, who wanted to give evidence of their patients’ health through narrative, Freud believed that only individuals who struggled to narrate their lives coherently should be patients in the first place. Psychoanalysis and sexology thus both equate narrative coherence with health, but choose the subjects for their case histories based on opposite criteria. Indeed, Freud would place the burden of constructing a coherent narrative on the analyst, not the analysand. It was the psychoanalyst that had to create meaning out of the incoherent narratives his or her patient delivered. Of course, the Freudian case studies generally fail to achieve the semblance of coherence and Freud himself

would draw attention to the open-ended nature of his writing (Moi, “Dora” 63).¹⁹ Because of the fragmented nature of Freud’s cases, they are often read as *literary* rather than *scientific* texts. While Freud’s rhetoric merits the critical attention it has received, reading his case histories purely as literature can also, as Laura Marcus maintains, underplay the remaining tension between literature and science and obscure the fact that Freud continued to be invested in the referential and therapeutic function of narrative (*Auto/Biographical* 84-85).

If readings of Freudian case histories often come down in favour of literary analysis, the literary dimension of sexological case histories is often completely ignored. According to McLaren, sexology itself “was as much a literary as a scientific undertaking” (87). Hirschfeld, Ellis and Symonds were actively involved in the literary culture of their time and allusions to literary works abound in sexological publications. Moreover, many of the case histories, especially in *Sexual Inversion*, were themselves written by professional writers like Carpenter or Symonds and Hirschfeld’s patients were often highly educated, too. In addition, sexologists shared an understanding that literariness could point to a useful flexibility of expression. Hirschfeld links the autobiographical case study to the realm of literary production by affirming the “excellent connection of the erotic with the literary (and, on a broad scale, artistic) invention of stories” (*Transvestites* 78). The reason behind this positive attitude towards literary writing can be explained by the tendency to move away from fixed categorical schemes and towards more open models such as the one of sexual intermediacy. Instead of trying to make diverse bodies fit a narrow scheme, the explosion of sexological vocabulary pointed to a more complex and multifaceted understanding of sex and sexuality. While early sexological writings by the likes of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing are famous for their overabundance of taxonomical neologisms, the absurdity of these ever more elaborate classificatory systems was recognised by Ellis and Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld’s model of sexual intermediacy offered a much more flexible framework that did away with the need of terminological classification. Hirschfeld calculated that there could be 43,046,721

¹⁹ Freud would justify this lack of coherence, for instance, by arguing that only incomplete narratives could be published due to censorship restraints. He would also imply that therapeutic failures would offer the more interesting results because the analysis would not be terminated so quickly, allowing him to gather more information (Sulloway, “Case” 265).

different combinations of sexual types (*Transvestites* 227). Affirming that “there are more emotions and phenomena than words”, he hoped that a literary and not strictly referential employment of words could ‘stretch’ language so as to accommodate those intermediate subjects that could not easily be positioned in pre-established categories (*Transvestites* 17). Hirschfeld could embrace this diversity, as he was interested in description rather than classification or theorisation. He repeatedly emphasised that, unlike Freud, he did not want to provide a theoretical analysis of sexuality, but only sought to describe the multiple expressions of sex.²⁰ Therefore, he did not have to analyse his patient narratives to the same degree as Freud to try and make them fit a specific pre-established scheme.²¹ The continuum of sexual subject positions was not unsettled by diversity, but gained validity through it.²² This means that sexologists like Ellis and Hirschfeld did not exclusively measure the ‘success’ of a case history in terms of a dogmatic adherence to sexological terminology, but welcomed more flexible and inventive approaches. If many of the case histories read more ‘smoothly’ than Freud’s, this is not because sexology enforced more rigid rules but, ironically, because it did not try to subsume a variety of diverse life histories under a single theoretical dogma.

Baer’s memoirs demonstrate that intelligence and, by extension health, could not only be proven by strictly adhering to narrative models of continuity and sexual dimorphism, but also by a more complex engagement with them. These breaks in narrative continuity can be read as signs of rebellion against the governmental script of the sexological case history. However, I shall argue that this reading ultimately takes away agency from the subject and fails to acknowledge how contemporary gendered models of temporal consciousness come to influence the process of writing the self.

²⁰ See Herzer for a detailed overview of the relationship between Hirschfeld’s sexological project and psychoanalysis (153-197).

²¹ Of course, considerable tension between the sexological framework and the case histories remained despite the fact that Hirschfeld had a less rigid theoretical apparatus than Freud. See, for instance, Hill for a discussion of the case histories in *Transvestites*.

²² A similar step away from classification is evident in Ellis’ writings. In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, he classified the case histories as ‘simple inversion’ and ‘psychical hermaphroditism’. In the third edition, on the other hand, he emphasises that the “division into heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual is a useful superficial division, [but] it is scarcely a scientific classification” (100).

The Case of Karl M.[artha] Baer

Baer's memoirs, *Aus den Maedchenjahren eines Mannes* (*Of a Man's Maiden Years*), were first published under the pseudonym N.O. Body in Berlin in 1907. Born in 1885 with hypospadias, Baer was raised as a girl despite the fact that he was hormonally and genetically male.²³ At the age of 21, Baer legally changed sex after he had fallen in love with a married woman. He consulted a number of doctors in Berlin and, like so many other individuals seeking to change their sex, was soon referred to Hirschfeld's institute. We know that Baer was examined by several doctors from Hirschfeld's circle of colleagues, including Iwan Bloch, before his sex change (Thorson 154). Hirschfeld also uses Baer as a case study in several of his own publications.²⁴ Baer was diagnosed as a male pseudo-hermaphrodite and allowed to legally change sex. In addition, he was encouraged to write his memoirs, which were a huge success, quickly going through seven different editions. The book was also adapted to film twice, in 1912 and 1919.²⁵ While the memoirs are not published as part of a larger sexological work, they are strongly embedded in the sexological context of the time. The text itself appeared together with a foreword by Rudolf Presber, a practising doctor, colleague and friend of Hirschfeld's, and an epilogue by Hirschfeld himself. Presber emphasises that Baer was not under the influence of suggestion, yet the intertextual impact of other case histories is strongly felt both with regard to content and narrative structure. In an important aside at the beginning of his memoirs, for example, Baer makes a point of including information about his family history and stresses that he knows of "no cases of mental or physical degeneration" that would present a hereditary taint (15).

Presber and Baer are both keen to legitimise the publication of the memoirs by emphasising not only their veracity, but also their didactic function. Hirschfeld believed that first-person patient narratives would be more accessible to the general public and more likely to evoke feelings of sympathy than the more neutral and sterile medical reports. In contrast to Freud's case studies, which were meant to

²³ Hypospadias is a birth defect resulting in the displacement of the urethra on the penis.

²⁴ Baer appears as Anna Laabs in Hirschfeld's *Sexualpathologie* and is also referenced in *Transvestites* as N.O. Body (2: 44-48; 63).

²⁵ See Simon ("Mannes"). Hermann Simon has been very generous in sharing information about Baer's life and making published and unpublished work available to me.

prove psychoanalytic theories largely to a professional audience, Hirschfeld believed that personal accounts could serve a more direct didactic purpose and sought to make them accessible to a general audience whom he wished to educate. For him, the ethical impact of case studies was intimately tied to their being written by real, human individuals. In his chapter on hermaphroditism in *Sexualpathologie*, Hirschfeld emphasises the necessity of case histories:

Aus dieser lebendigen Quelle schoepfend, gewinnt der Leser am ehesten Klarheit und kommt dadurch in die Lage, einer Menschengruppe in ihren eigenartigen Schicksalen gerecht zu werden, die ... mehr noch wie unter eigenen Bildungsfehlern unter Fehlern in der Bildung anderer gelitten hat. (2: 25)

From this vivid ['living'] source, the reader is most likely to gain clarity and the ability to do justice to a group of people with their unique fates, who ... have suffered even more from the mistakes in the [educational] formation of others than from their own [physical] malformations. (my translation)

Hirschfeld maintains that it is society's ignorance rather than the physical or sexual abnormalities of his patients that needs to change. Because of its didactic and emotive force, the autobiographical case study was viewed as instrumental in the struggle for the social acceptance of sexual intermediacy. In the foreword to Baer's memoirs, Presber argues along similar lines when he asserts that Baer's story will serve a didactic purpose and help to enlighten those "standing at the gravesides of youths who have killed themselves" as well as those about to commit "the terrible mistakes in child rearing" that would drive children like Baer into suicide in the first place (5). Baer himself stresses in the final sentence of his memoirs that he wrote the text as "a contribution to modern psychology ... in the interest of science and truth" (108).

In addition to creating social acceptance, the writing of the autobiography also has a more personal constitutive significance. In his foreword, Presber describes how he saw Baer before and after his sex change. Despite the fact that Baer's 'true' male sex has been diagnosed, Presber indicates that Baer appears to 'pass' more convincingly as a female. Sensing Baer's lack of certainty and comfort in his new male role, Presber gives him the following advice:

If you wish to begin a new life, give yourself and others an account of what lies behind you ... And with every honest line you write, a rusty fetter that cuts into your flesh, a sad piece of the past that oppresses you will fall away.

And on the path of this first task that you perform as a *man*, you may find your way to a new profession, a new lifelong purpose, for which you are now searching, hemmed in by all the strangeness, the unaccustomed and embarrassing things, still timid and without proper confidence. (5-6; his emphasis)

As writing about the self becomes the first task of Baer's new life as a man, narrative and masculinity are closely intertwined. However, Baer's past also problematises narrative construction. The very title of his memoirs draws attention to his dysteleological development from girl to man, which cannot easily meet the generic demands of narrative coherence. If one of the aims of autobiographical writing is to reconcile object and subject, to bridge the temporal gulf that makes self-reflection possible in the first place, Baer's position as a male narrator looking back on a female self is an almost impossible one. His sexual conversion, which is meant to bring out an underlying truth and thereby connect the individual fragments of his life, threatens to endanger any sense of narrative continuity.

To work against this potential fragmentation, Baer emphasises the latency of his masculinity by using the narrative strategy of anticipation or prolepsis, which is commonly found in autobiographical writings. First-person narrative, Gerard Genette argues, "lends itself better than any other to anticipation, by the very fact of its avowedly retrospective character, which authorizes the narrator to allude to the future and in particular to his present situation, as these to some extent form part of his role" (67). When Baer affirms on the opening page, "I was born a boy, raised a girl", he affirms his masculinity despite the fact that its affirmation is delayed until the end of the narrative (7). Thus, Baer's female past is determined by the implied viewpoint of his future male self so that Martha Baer's 'boyish' interests, her desire for other girls and her pressing urge to go to university and obtain an education are reduced to premature expressions of a belatedly affirmed maleness. In fact, the majority of events and information Baer chooses to include in his narrative point to his future sense of self so that the memoirs become the very archive of an 'always already' anticipated masculinity. Baer's rhetoric is essentialist, as he describes that the awareness of his as yet unconfirmed masculinity was "stronger than all logic" (89). The deterministic logic of the narrative is expressed on the opening page of the memoirs: "The fabric of my life was twisted from tangled threads until, with a mighty

blow, the inner nature of my masculinity tore apart the veil of half-truths that upbringing, habit, and vital necessity had spun about me” (7). The image Baer employs juxtaposes gradual and organic growth with an artificially imposed cocoon, a cultural straightjacket of femininity. He asserts a material knowledge that provides stability and permanence at the same time as it is changing and evolving. This paradox is resolved through the turning point, which determines the direction of change and gives coherence to the narrative as a whole. Importantly, the essentialist logic of the memoirs not only insists on sexual dimorphism, but it is also heteronormative. Baer describes again and again that girls are drawn to him and implies that this is because they instinctively react to his masculinity.

Since the proleptic structure of the narrative leaves no room for dissident sexualities, the reader of the memoirs finds himself or herself in an ethical and methodological dilemma. In her reading of the David Reimer case, Judith Butler describes this problem in terms of ‘doing justice to someone’ (*Undoing* 57-74). Do we do justice to Baer by affirming his masculinity? Or do we have to assume that this masculinity was violently inscribed by rigid sexual – and narrative – norms, so that we can only do justice to Baer if we unravel his narrative and, by extension, undo the masculinity he claims? Rather than attempt to offer a universal solution to this problem, I hope to show that Baer himself invites a reading of his memoirs that opens up an important critical space, which allows us to go beyond his masculine identification without denying it.

In his narrative, Baer often seeks to draw attention to the difference between the self in the present, which knows that he is male, and the self in the past, which lacks this certainty. In the following passage, which describes the feelings of his former female self, Martha, at the age of nine, the clash between the knowledge of the present and the knowledge of the past is strongly pronounced:

Being brought up as a girl, being called by a girl’s name had had a suggestive influence on me. I ... was entirely convinced that I was a girl, just a bit different from most, which did not appear at all strange to me. Since my nature was different from all theirs, why should my body not be so, too? ... And then, all at once, I became conscious: yes, the others, down there, they were certainly very different! And a nameless fright took hold of me. (31)

Baer transitions from a knowing point of view of the present to the more ambivalent feelings of his past self. Believing herself to be a girl, Martha nevertheless has an

awareness of the fact that she fails to fulfil the norms of femininity. Because the narrative is not overdetermined by Baer's belatedly affirmed masculinity here, the girl lacks the language to express herself – her feelings remain 'nameless'. Baer's use of pseudonymy becomes important, as we can see that Martha Baer is 'nobody'. In Butler's words, she is "the human in its anonymity, as that which we do not yet know how to name or that which sets a limit on all narrating ... the human as it speaks itself at the limits of what we think we know" (*Undoing* 74). The unspeakable and unknowable feelings of Martha present a rupture in Baer's narrative that threaten to undermine its continuity.

This sense of confusion increases during puberty. The physical and emotional changes do not produce a self-knowing subject, but rather cause a deepening sense of desperation. This anxiety is again conveyed through passages that are not structured through prolepsis. Baer describes, for instance, how at the age of fifteen,

[t]he old doubts began anew. Whatever could I be? Boy or girl? If I was a girl, why were my breasts not growing? Why did I alone remain childish and undeveloped? ... If I was a boy, why, then, this girl's name? All the deep suffering, which I had thought was behind me, began again and tormented me dreadfully. (55)

The pubescent Martha has found a language to describe her own ambivalence, which is no longer nameless, but either a 'boy' or a 'girl'. The struggle of self-discovery is here mapped more explicitly onto the sexed body. Martha does not menstruate, but she cannot yet read this absence as an affirmation of her masculinity. Instead, she believes that she suffers from consumption and is doomed to die. Martha lapses into self-effacement and becomes 'no body', as she lacks the necessary knowledge to successfully signify her body in the present.

While Baer's memoirs do include the turning point where his 'true' sex is discovered and Martha's feelings are retrospectively accounted for, the ending of the narrative unsettles rather than affirms Baer's masculinity. Baer subverts the turning point, as he implies that his masculinity is not fully established through the medical diagnosis. His physical sex has been affirmed as male, but he has yet to overcome serious practical obstacles that keep him from functioning successfully as a man in society. He stresses, for instance, that finding employment will be difficult for 'Norbert O. Body' as all of his "certificates or testimonials" are issued to 'Nora O.

Body' (106). While Baer's narrative reads as if his future is decidedly that of a man, a closer consideration reveals that this future masculinity is never actually obtained, but merely anticipated. His masculinity is deferred into a future that lies outside of the text so that he is not quite male yet. He is on the threshold of becoming a man. As Mark Currie points out, in most written fictional narratives, the future is 'already-there' and has a structuring role in the sense that it can be anticipated, 'driving' the plot by providing a straightforward goal of development (20). In his memoirs, Baer does not avail of the option of presenting a stable masculine future. In delaying the affirmation of his masculinity beyond the ending of the narrative, he also problematises its proleptic reach, as his masculinity is never secured. It is possible to argue that the breakdown of narrative structure results from the fact that the prescriptive narrative of the case history cannot do justice to the complexities of lived experience, but the point is that Baer could have invented a stable masculinity and did not do so, choosing an open-ended narrative instead.

The question that arises is why Baer would choose to subvert the logic of anticipation that seems to determine the success of his narrative and, by extension, masculinity. Interestingly, we know that Baer did not only allow for the memory of Martha Baer to persist in his memoirs. Hermann Simon has uncovered important information about Baer's life after the sex change. Baer maintained the letter M. to refer to his second name, as he still wanted to be associated with the articles he had published as Martha Baer, for instance. While he would sometimes explain that the 'M.' stood for Max or Meir, it nevertheless remained as a legible trace of Martha (Simon, "Afterword" 115). At the very least, this suggests that Martha did not interfere with Baer's masculinity and that he did not, at all costs, try to obscure her.

Drawing on gendered figurations of temporal consciousness at the turn of the century, it is possible to argue that the memory of a former female self could have allowed Baer to actively affirm rather than undermine his male identity. This reading becomes available through the misogynistic evolutionary logic that characterised gendered discourses on memory and maturity in the early twentieth century. As the discussion in the previous chapter has shown, femininity was seen as a hierarchically lower and temporally earlier stage of development. This stage could be overcome via the male employment of synthesising memory and intellectual ability. Presber's

invocation of the ‘male’ task to construct a meaningful narrative in the foreword reminds us of this connection between masculinity and memory that emerged in influential texts such as Otto Weininger’s *Sex and Character*, first published in German in 1903 and in English in 1906.²⁶ Weininger presents the argument that woman is incapable of memory, whereas man has the ability to be ‘omnireminiscent’, to remember everything and synthesise it in a coherent narrative.

This *essential* continuity, which alone can fully assure a human being that he is *alive*, that he exists, that he is in the world ... is ***totally absent in women***. When a woman contemplates her life ... it does not appear to her under the aspect of an inexorable, incessant thrusting and striving, but she continually gets *stuck* at individual points. (109; his emphasis)

Weininger believed that women are ‘stuck’ in time and cannot progress, as they are determined by sexual instinct and reproductive function. Through this biologisation of female time, women are positioned in a past that precedes male consciousness and individualisation. Weininger’s book was radical and highly influential. In a letter to Ellis, for instance, Carpenter criticises *Sex and Character*, particularly because Weininger did not question the category of the ‘Absolute Male’, but he also described it as a “work of genius”. More specifically, Carpenter finds that “there is a good deal in the general position that Woman always represents a past (... she is enclitic to the man), whereas Man may well represent the whole” (5 October 1906; n. pag.). Woman emerges as the predecessor of a self-conscious and temporally complex male subject, who recognises the disparity of life, but can still produce a continuous narrative.

Taking into consideration how gender came to inflect understandings of temporal consciousness, we can argue that Baer kept his middle name and published his memoirs under a gender-ambiguous pseudonym precisely because he wanted to remind us of the femininity he had left behind. In this sense, the pseudonym ‘N.O. Body’ does not signify effacement, but rather reminds us of the past Baer has overcome. It is only by virtue of his masculinity that he can rise above a position of uncertainty, remember and begin to align the memory of the girl he used to be with

²⁶ There is no hard evidence of Baer’s familiarity with Weininger’s book, but since it was one of the most influential texts of the time and Baer was intimately familiar with psychological and sexological discourses, there is little doubt that he would have read Weininger. Moreover, Weininger did not produce his study in a cultural vacuum and many of the ideas he expressed were also found in other contemporary texts.

the knowledge of the man he is in the present. The fact that he would choose an English pseudonym for the articulation of his German-Jewish self is not only an expression of displacement, but also of worldliness and education that further underlines his ability to work together elements that are usually thought of as oppositional. The final deferral of a future certainty can also be read as an attempt to emphasise temporal consciousness. By ‘failing’ to conclude his narrative, he proves that he recognises the continuous quality of time. He anticipates an open-ended future against which the will of the male subject can be measured in the first place. If Baer breaks away from the coherent structure of the case study to emphasise the distance between the man he is and the woman he was, it is not because he wishes to undermine his masculinity nor is it a revolt against sexological norms. Rather, the ability to write coherently about the self is proven in the face of the lack of coherence of his life story, of which he reminds us. In doing so, Baer not only proves his intelligence and his health, but also his masculinity.²⁷

If the narrative construction of Baer’s masculinity is achieved through misogynist figurations of temporal consciousness, we also need to acknowledge that Martha Baer was a feminist and there is no evidence that Baer ever openly expressed antifeminist thoughts. The fact that he chooses the name ‘Nora’ for his female alter ego is telling as it is a direct reference to Ibsen’s New Woman play *The Doll’s House* (Thorson 157). It is ironic that Martha’s desire to escape the restraints of her gender role would result in the effacement of her femininity. As a result, her erotic feelings for other women are translated into a heterosexual framework. This is a problem we

²⁷ *Sex and Character* would have held particular significance for the German-Jewish Baer, because of Weininger’s preoccupation with the figure of the male Jew. In Weininger, the individual’s ability to memorise and narrate the past and to arrive at a coherent sense of self carried implications not only with regard to the sexualised, but also the racialised Jewish body. Weininger, who was Jewish himself, maintained that, like women, Jews were incapable of memory and self-reflection. Gilman has shown how Baer obscures his Jewish identity in the memoirs, while still maintaining an outsider status, for instance, by describing his lineage as Catholic and French (xix-xxiv). Gilman argues that Baer’s Jewish identity further problematised Baer’s masculinity as the Jewish body was perceived as effeminate because of negative cultural interpretations of circumcision and the myth of male menstruation. If Baer censored his Jewish identity in the memoirs, he certainly did not share Weininger’s anti-Semitism. Quite the contrary, Gilman argues that the affirmation of Baer’s masculinity helps him to overcome the hatred of the Jewish body and to embrace his own identity as that of a “healthy, Jewish male” (xxiv). Indeed, on the last page, Baer describes himself as “a lonely wanderer [who] found the right path” (108). The effeminate figure of the wandering Jew is here overcome by turning towards a masculine identity. Since Baer’s masculinity remains anticipatory, as we have seen, he refigures the instability of the displaced Jewish self in positive terms by defining it against a femininity that, according to Felski, has never left or lost her home (41). Baer’s Jewish identity and its significance in the memoirs has been discussed in detail by Gilman and Thorson.

have encountered before. In the discussion of Panizza's short story in the previous chapter, for instance, the lesbian reading of Alexina and Henriette's relationship becomes impossible as soon as Alexina's masculinity is affirmed. This raises the question of the conditions under which the lesbian subject can emerge within the discourse of sexology and the wider cultural context. Baer overcomes his female self, but, as we have seen, he does so by creating breaks in his otherwise coherent narrative. In these nicks, we can catch a glimpse of male-identified and women-loving Martha Baer without doing injustice to Karl Baer's masculinity. In the next chapter, I examine how the joint crisis of masculinity and narrative coherence experienced during the Great War would open up these cracks and facilitate the emergence of masculine women and lesbian subjects.

Chapter 4

The Temporal, Sexual and National Crises of the Great War

Yet one more group of ghosts come into my mind – Women this time, if so they must be called. Women then who are sexually inverted. The war was to them something like a Godsend, I might almost dare to say Gods [sic] justification. For the first time in their lives they were given a chance to justify their abhorred existence, nor were they slow to recognise [?] their chance and to serve this country with skill & courage. But sooner or later wars come to an end. What then, my brethren [sic], what happened to you then, did England praise you for what you are? Did England say “By their fruits have I judged them?” Not at all, England said “Since they did such good work, it is obvious then they must be quite normal.” ... And sometimes you make me want to weep for you, so desperately do you cling to the past, to the memory of those years of war. And sometimes you do rather foolish things – standing still & erect at God Save the King as you used to do hands clasped to your sides, or talking too loudly about your war service, or assuming an air of bonhommie [sic] – strikes one as somewhat exaggerated, as walking with a more merry stride than do men. Yes sometimes you do rather foolish things, but for all this your fine, and honest service. (Hall, “Ghosts” n. pag.)¹

Radclyffe Hall’s unpublished manuscript presents a catalogue of figures rendered spectral through the Great War: men who have lost their comrades in the war; crippled soldiers hidden away in the country; men who did not fight at all and feel alienated from a generation they never belonged to. Then, Hall introduces another ghost, the female invert, who takes her place among the army of male ghosts. Laying claim to a masculine national identity that became available during the war, but appears parodic in times of peace, she is reduced to a pitiable creature. In contrast to the other ghosts, she fails to move on from the war not because it was a traumatic experience she cannot free herself from, but because it offered a previously unknown sense of affirmation and recognition.

What connects the different ghosts Hall describes is the experience of anachronism, the feeling of being ‘stuck’ in the war even though it had officially ended. The problem of how to move on from the war was generally felt in post-war

¹ I am drawing on unpublished drafts of Radclyffe Hall’s short fiction held by the HRC. The draft of “Ghosts” is handwritten and heavily revised. It is not dated, but must have been written after *The Well of Loneliness* trials in 1928 and 1929, because Hall references the trial in the manuscript.

culture. D.H. Lawrence described the war as a “cataclysm” that had destroyed the “smooth road into the future” (*Chatterley* 5). For Virginia Woolf, the war was a “chasm in a smooth road” (“Tower” 111). These descriptions of the war as a rupture or fissure along a previously even surface indicate that the war constituted a radical break with temporal order.

But if time broke down, it did not stand still. As Gertrude Stein reminds us, “war makes things go backward as well as forward” (2). Indeed, the radical changes brought about by the war continued to be explained in terms of backwardness or forwardness, primitivism and progress. On the one hand, the war was perceived as an unprecedented lapse into barbarism, a backlash to a previous, primitive stage of development. The breakdown of ideals of masculinity in particular contributed to the sense that civilisation had come to an end. In Paul Fussell’s words, the war constituted a “hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress” (8). For many women, on the other hand, social conditions did change for the better, as a rich body of research has shown.² According to Havelock Ellis, the war turned Europe into “a great experimental laboratory for testing the aptitudes of women” (*Essays* 101). The key factor was the necessity of an alternative labour force due to the absence of men. As women took over jobs that could no longer be filled with male workers, their social status changed and a new degree of freedom became possible not least with regard to financial independence. One of the most noticeable outcomes of the war was the emergence of women as legal subjects due to the partial suffrage, which was gained in Britain in 1918.

As masculinity became more elastic, the war also facilitated the emergence of what Judith Halberstam has called ‘female masculinities’. I am using the term in its widest possible sense to incorporate a range of different subject positions that are, as we shall see, characterised by a shared experience of time.³ This approach is important because, as Laura Doan points out, it was not always automatically

² In addition to the works mentioned in this chapter, see, for instance, Grayzel, Watson and Woollacott.

³ Female masculinity can be understood as one expression of sexual intermediacy as it comprises a multitude of reading possibilities. From the point of view of the present, early twentieth-century female masculinity can be a way of expressing or encoding lesbian desire, a prototype of lesbian or particularly butch identity, or transgender identity.

assumed that the masculine woman was also sexually inverted (“Topsy-Turvy” 535-536). Nevertheless, the figure of the masculine woman and the female homosexual were often conflated. Women like Hall certainly believed that the war facilitated the emergence of a visible lesbian subject, as it opened up new opportunities for the articulation of non-normative gender roles and dissident sexualities within a national rhetoric of citizenship.⁴

Yet normative constructions of sexual difference and sexuality did not come to an end during or after the war. According to Trudi Tate and Suzanne Raitt, “government propaganda struggled ... to cling on to a fundamental continuity with peacetime versions of Edwardian womanhood” (5). As historians like Susan Kingsley Kent have shown, the post-war period witnessed the attempt to reconstruct gender and sexual norms (*Peace*). This backlash against non-normative sexual subjects was expressed in the infamous Maud Allan trial of 1918 in which alleged lesbianism was explicitly associated with sedition (Cohler 82-91). Moreover, three years after the end of the war, Parliament witnessed the first attempt in British history to outlaw lesbian sexuality (Dellamora, “Engendering” 93).⁵ As traditional gender politics came to be associated with peace and stability, as well as national health and progress, the liberties war time offered women were soon foreclosed. To move on from the war, it seemed, side effects of the war such as the masculine woman and the lesbian had to be left behind.

Because the failure of masculinity opened up a range of opportunities for women, it is tempting to rely on an oppositional gender politics that juxtaposes female emancipation and male failure.⁶ However, as we have seen, the inability to move on from the war was experienced not only by the masculine woman, but also

⁴ Even though the Great War came to be seen as a caesural event, it is important to note that it extended debates that predated it. The breakdown of faith in stable gender roles was anticipated in sexological and evolutionary discourses as the previous three chapters have shown. Moreover, the emergence of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century paved the way for a changed understanding of female gender, sexual and national identity. Similarly, the breakdown of temporal order was also prefigured, for instance, in evolutionary science or in the emergence of psychoanalysis. Finally, English national identity had been weakened in colonial wars and through the imperial project and the related science of anthropology and ethnography.

⁵ Even though the amendment was passed, the bill to which it was attached failed, so the law did not come into effect.

⁶ Sandra Gilbert, for instance, has the tendency to read the sexual wounds of the male soldier as the precondition of female triumph. To illustrate her point, she juxtaposes pictures of able-bodied Amazons with those of crippled male soldiers (“Heart”). Her work has been criticised because of “its emphasis on confrontational gender politics” (Cardinal, Goldman and Hattaway 5-6).

by the male soldier: female and male masculinities were undercut by the same temporal anxieties. Through a discussion of Lawrence's *The Fox* and Hall's "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself", I propose to show that it is the shared experience of anachronism that forges close connections between different masculinities. More specifically, it is the alienation from the time lines of sexual development and national belonging that was shared by the masculine woman and the male soldier. If the war allowed lesbian writers like Hall to articulate an emerging lesbian subjectivity, this is at least partly due to the fact that the war disrupted temporal order in a way that cut across identity categories and affected male and female masculinities equally.

Because of its greater length, the chapter is divided into three sections: the first explores the anachronisms of female and male masculinities in the context of the war and sets the framework for the following literary analyses. The second part turns to Lawrence's reaction to the war and presents a close reading of *The Fox*. In the end, I discuss Hall's representation of the war in her short story "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" and related unpublished drafts.

4.1 Anachronistic Masculinities

Anachronism and Female Masculinity

What is at stake in claiming the war as a point of origin for the lesbian subject as Hall does in “Ghosts”? I propose that choosing the frame of war as a site of emergence contributes to the lesbian’s perverse relationship to time, which has been discussed in recent years. Noticeably, it is mostly the *masculine* lesbian that is at the centre of these discussions.⁷ For Terry Castle, masculinity is a form of masquerade that displaces an assumed ‘real’ lesbian that resides elsewhere. The lesbian cannot name herself, so she adopts “the next best thing”, masculine disguise, in order to make herself present (*Apparitional* 104). In this reading, masculinity is often – all too easily – abandoned as a form of imposed deviance by a sexological and psychoanalytic discourse (Halberstam, *Masculinity* 72). Annamarie Jagose’s study of lesbianism and temporality has enriched this field of inquiry: rather than reducing the masculine lesbian to a spectral figure, Jagose concentrates on the way in which masculinity operates temporally in the narratives that construct the lesbian. Focusing on psychoanalysis and sexology, Jagose shows that the lesbian’s relationship to temporal order is perverse precisely because of her masculinity. The lesbian is presented as both backwards or primitive, as she has failed to ‘outgrow’ a primordial masculinity. She is also secondary or derivative, because she is explained in terms of an original masculinity that is never properly her own (*Inconsequence* 24-36).⁸

If we assert that the war did, in some way, facilitate the emergence of the lesbian subject, as Hall maintains, it is important to ask how war conditions contributed to the lesbian’s paradoxical relation to time. I propose that the war offers one possible site of the emergence of the lesbian subject precisely because the temporal paradoxes affecting articulations of female masculinity during wartime correspond to those brought forward in sexological and psychoanalytic discourses on

⁷ I am using the terms female masculinity, female homosexuality and female inversion interchangeably here, as I am drawing on a present-day framework of lesbian temporality. Female homosexuality was not always necessarily implicated in discussions of female masculinity and I shall tease out the differences later on in my discussion of specific literary texts.

⁸ The discussion of anachronism and female masculinities presented in this chapter uses Jagose’s framework and applies it to the context of the war.

female inversion. In particular, my discussion focuses on primitivity, derivation and a fraught relationship to futurity.

As examined in previous chapters, sexology drew on evolutionary models of development and presented male and female sexual inversion as a form of hermaphroditism. Because hermaphroditism was viewed as an overcome stage of development, sexual inversion came to partake in this association with primitivism. Ellis, for instance, explains in the first edition of *Sexual Inversion* that “[i]f the sexual instinct is undifferentiated in early life, then we must regard the inversion of later life, if it persists, as largely due to arrested development” (126). Following the same evolutionary logic, but arguing on the level of the species rather than the individual, Iwan Bloch asserts in *Sexual Lives of Our Times*, first translated into English in 1909, that “the obliteration of the distinction between the specific masculine and the specific feminine” was opposed to progressive development, so that “[t]he production of the so-called ‘third sex’ is unquestionably a step backwards” (11). Freud also draws on evolutionary logic in his “Three Essays on Sexuality”. Like Ellis and Bloch, he explains sexual inversion as a result of an undifferentiated sexual instinct that comes to be associated with the primitive: “[i]n inverted types, a predominance of archaic constitutions and primitive psychical mechanisms is regularly to be found” (7: n.146). This association between female masculinity and primitivism was strengthened during the war, as the war itself was seen as a stepback in progressive development. If sexual difference was unsettled during the war, for instance, by women adopting masculine roles, the outcome of this process could easily be read as an expression of the overall lapse into the primitive that had to be overcome for normal development to be restored.

Arrested on the level of masculine identification, the lesbian is not only backwards, but also – paradoxically – derived from an original masculinity she can never lay claim to. Freud, for instance, maintained in his “Case of Homosexuality in a Woman” that the girl “repudiated ... the feminine role ... changed into a man and took her mother in place of her father as the object of her love (18: 158). Thus, the lesbian turns away from an original femininity and towards a masculinity that remains imitative (Jagose, *Inconsequence* 33). The war came to reinforce the idea that female masculinity was a form of imitation rather than an original identity.

Doan, for instance, shows that the response to women in uniform changed after the war had come to an end: during the war, it was the people who failed to accept cross-dressed women that were “old-fashioned”, but after the war, it was the masculine woman herself that had become an anachronism and was met with a more critical response (*Sapphism* 66-67). Sharon Ouditt argues that even during the war, the response to masculine women was often hostile due to “a resistance to the ‘false’ claims on power positions” made by women (25). These anxieties are expressed in Charlotte Haldane’s *Motherhoods and its Enemies* (1927), which describes

the ‘warworking’ type of ‘woman’ – aping the cropped hair, the great booted feet, the grim jaw, the uniform, and if possible, the medals, of the military man. If this type had been transitory its usefulness might be accorded, but it is not doubtful ... that in a long run we shall have to regret its social and political influence, much as we may applaud its wartime works. (quoted in Jeffreys, 207-208)

In Haldane’s comment, the masculine woman appears as both imitative and primitive. She is a parodic spectacle, but she is also positioned below the current stage of development, she is a ‘transitory type’ doomed to extinction. What becomes apparent here is that to account for the lesbian within a frame of war is to implicate her in a time of endings: the end of innumerable lives as well as the assumed end of civilisation and progress. Valerie Rohy has argued that “arrested development [is often viewed] as contagious: it is not just that time stops *for the other* but that the other – the ‘primitive,’ savage or homosexual – wields the power to stop time for all the world” (x; her emphasis). Temporally backwards and described as a product of the war, the lesbian comes to embody the end of progress, civilisation and time itself.

The masculine woman’s alleged endangering of the future had important implications with regard to her status as a citizen in the nation state. According to Angelique Richardson, the turn of the century witnessed the subjection of women to a gendered model of citizenship, which juxtaposed fighting in the war with the ability to provide children to the nation (*Love* 58-77). In the context of eugenic debates, having children was not primarily seen as an expression of love, but as a rational decision to serve the nation. A model of citizenship based on maternity and biological reproduction was not available to many lesbian women just as it excluded those women who could not or did not want to have children for other reasons. Indeed, the anxieties regarding the masculine woman’s failure to reproduce were not

limited to questions of lesbianism, but derived from debates surrounding the figure of the New Woman. Bloch sums up the rhetoric of his time when he argues that women belonging to the 'third sex' are "barren, stunted ... incapable of prolonged existence ... [due to the fact that] the possibility of transmission by inheritance of valuable peculiarities is cut off, and hence the possibility of future perfectibility, of true 'progress', is excluded" (13). The failure to bear children did not only exclude these women from normative gender roles, but also deprived them of a sense of national identity.

This is not to say that national discourse does not apply to lesbian subjects. Quite the contrary, the war allowed lesbians to emerge as national citizens in the first place. The primary reason why women like Hall perceived the war as liberating was because it temporarily offered access to a model of female citizenship that was not based on maternal duties. Serving the nation by adopting previously masculine roles, women could experience a hitherto unknown sense of national validation.⁹ However, as the quotation from "Ghosts" shows, England soon came to reject the female invert's status as a national subject after the war had ended, which once again reinforced the lesbian's exclusion from the progressive time line of the nation.

Anachronism and Male Masculinity

The temporal predicaments of female masculinity also came to affect men themselves. Traditional ideals of masculinity were debunked, as soldiers failed to live up to images of Victorian heroism. This is not to say that traditional understandings of masculinity were not maintained and even reinforced during the war. However, the disconnection between a masculine ideal and the reality of soldiers' lives in combat was increasingly felt. The physically and psychologically crippled soldiers that returned from the war indicated the loss of an original

⁹ In Germany, many homosexual men approached Hirschfeld, asking him how they should behave so as to 'pass' as heterosexual in the military. Military service offered access to a model of heroic masculinity and form of national identity (Wolff 158). Women also asked for Hirschfeld's help as they wished to change sex so as to be able to participate in the war. Karola Hefner, for instance, consulted Hirschfeld in order to change sex not only because she was convinced that she was a man, but also because of her desire to be a soldier (*Sexualpathologie* 2: 57). She had tried to enlist in the military, but had been rejected and now needed Hirschfeld to consent to her legal sex change. Based on her physical status, her behavioural traits and her sexual interest in women, Hirschfeld concludes that Karola is a man and should be allowed to join the military as Karl.

masculinity and once again emphasised the experience of discontinuity, the fact that the pre-war world did not resemble the post-war world in any sense (Leed 3). Thus, the male soldier took on a structural position that can be compared to the one of the masculine woman, who is defined in terms of an original masculinity she cannot lay claim to.

At the same time, the male soldier came to be seen as a primitive figure that has fallen away from the principles of civilisation during the war. In addition to charges of barbaric violence, 'civilised' heterosexuality was at stake. There were growing suspicions that the war conditions were perverting the sexual instinct of men. The figure of the soldier had always been highly sexualised: he was young, athletic, virile and, as such, came to embody national pride and futurity (Fussell, *War* 278). But on the other hand, the soldier was also a liminal figure whose youth and distance from the centres of civilisation combined with the closeness to other young men in the trenches could easily lead him astray.¹⁰ The 'unnatural' conditions of war were perceived as similar to those in schools or prison and were assumed to breed homosexual instincts even in non-congenital inverts, thus causing a retrogressive lapse into primitive sexualities.

The temporal, sexual and national anxieties surrounding the male soldier collide in the discourse of shell-shock. The question to what degree shell-shock was associated with gender inversion and sexual inversion is difficult to answer. Originally described as an organic illness caused by concussions from exposure to artillery fire, it soon emerged that the physical basis of shell-shock was more uncertain than had previously been assumed. This raised a number of questions pertaining to the legitimacy of shell-shock and the reason why some soldiers were affected while others were not. In *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter somewhat uncritically affirms that shell-shock came to be explained in terms of effeminacy through an association with the 'feminine' disease of hysteria.¹¹ She also maintains

¹⁰ The association of the soldier with male homoeroticism was not an invention of the Great War. See, for instance, Ellis (1st ed. n.102-103); Hirschfeld (*Berlin* 90-99).

¹¹ Showalter maintains that shell-shock was symptomatic of an inner rebellion against the ideals of masculinity that promoted the war, ideals which the soldiers could no longer fulfil. For Showalter, the psychosomatic nature of shell-shock has the same origins as female hysteria as emotions that can otherwise not be expressed due to restrictive gender roles manifest themselves in seemingly non-related physical and psychological symptoms. For a critical discussion of Showalter's reading of shell-shock see Busfield and Stryker.

that the shell-shocked soldier was alternatively viewed as impotent or homosexual. One of the problems that arises out of Showalter's argument is that gender and sexual deviance were not always mentioned explicitly in discussions of shell-shock (Stryker 158).

Instead of focusing on the politics of naming, we can turn to the temporal predicament that underwrites the nexus of alleged impotency and homosexuality, namely, the failure to participate in a progressive time line. For Jay Winter, shell-shock is a form of 'embodied memory' in which traumatic memories are inscribed on the body and keep the individual from moving on from the past. This traumatic time is

circular or fixed rather than linear. Here the clock doesn't [sic] move in a familiar way; at times its hands are set at a particular moment in wartime, a moment which may fade away, or may return, unintentionally triggered by a seemingly innocuous set of circumstances. When that happens, a past identity hijacks or obliterates present identity; and the war resumes again. (75)

The backwardness of the shell-shocked soldier was further supported by discussions of regression fuelled by Freudian thought. Examples of this train of thought can be found in the 1920 collection of essays entitled *Functional Nerve Disease: An Epitome of War Experience for the Practitioner*, for instance, which includes contributions by experts such as W.H.R. Rivers. The book includes a chapter by Maurice Nicoll on "Regression", in which he argues that the shell-shocked soldier tends to strive for "the security the infant experiences in its mother's arms" (100-101). In the following chapter, written by H. Crichton Miller and entitled "The Mother Complex", this tendency to turn backwards comes to be associated with non-normative forms of sexuality. Miller explains that "very many war neuroses occur in youths who ... are struggling to make the adaptation between 'mother's boy' and 'sweetheart's young man'" (120). While homosexuality is not mentioned explicitly in Miller's chapter, the case studies he includes do emphasise that many of the soldiers have no erotic attachments to women and are therefore possibly either asexual, impotent or homosexual. Key in discussions of shell-shock, however, is not primarily the question of homosexuality or homosexual identity, but, in Nicoll's words, the "[a]rrest of normal *forward movement*" and the "consequent continual *sacrifice of the future* at the expense of more suffering" (99; my emphasis). Just as

the masculine woman threatened to 'stop time' by virtue of her failure to reproduce, the male soldier's backwardness seemed to oppose the progressive flow of time itself.

The shell-shocked soldiers inability to partake in the future was echoed in concerns with male reproductivity that combined eugenic arguments with national concerns. During the war, growing anxieties were expressed regarding male rather than female reproductive ability and suitability. In his essay on "War and Eugenics", Ellis warns that the war does not only affect the quantity, but also the quality of men. In addition to reducing the birth rate, the war is also "actually pouring out the blood of the young manhood of the race" (*Essays* 29). Since only the 'fittest' men were chosen to fight while the 'unfit' men stayed at home, the "war never hits at random. ... It tends ... to strike out, temporarily, or in a fatal event, permanently from the class of fathers, precisely that percentage of the population which the eugenicist [sic] wishes to see in that class" (*Essays* 33). Ellen Key expresses similar fears in *War, Peace and the Future*, warning that "war spills the best blood"; she continues to explain that "were not women excluded from the service of war, and the best blood, therefore, on their side spared ... war would be fatal even to the future of the victorious nation" (85-86; her emphasis). As a result of the loss of an unprecedented number of young men in the war, the male body came to be seen in reproductive terms similar to those of the reproductive female body. While women were partially liberated from a model of citizenship that was dependent on biological reproduction, men were increasingly submitted to it.¹² The failure to partake in a reproductive

¹² The emerging discipline of endocrinology responded to these anxieties by offering a rhetoric of hope and progress that played on the dream of a malleable and perfectly regulated human body. In endocrinological experiments, it was the mutilated body of the male soldier that came to represent the wounded nation. Soldiers whose testicles had been injured or lost in the war were the ideal subjects for endocrinological research. In 1916, for instance, Eugen Steinach and Robert Lichtenstern tested the method of testicular implantation on a 29-year-old soldier whose testicles had to be removed after he had been stabbed during an attack. According to Steinach and Lichtenstern, the operation was a success as the patient soon regained his libido and his sexual function even though he could not produce offspring (Hirschfeld, *Sexualpathologie* 3: 20-21). Even though the ability to reproduce was, of course, the central concern from a eugenicist point of view, the promise of restoring sexual function and desire was sufficient to produce extreme public interest in endocrinological research. More specifically, endocrinology played into a cult of youth as it promised to rejuvenate patients and to restore their sexual, but also intellectual vigour and health (Sengoopta, *Secret* 4). In the 1920s, the golden age of endocrinology, the discipline came to be seen as a beacon of hope that promised to bring into existence a future that had previously been deemed lost. Thus, the apparently more and more plastic endocrinological body was needed to support the dream of a reconstructed nation.

futurity that underwrote national progress came to threaten the status of the male soldier as a national subject.

4.2 Backward or Forward? D.H. Lawrence and *The Fox*

The Great War, Masculinity and Modernism

It is often acknowledged that the war contributed significantly to the emergence of literary modernism. Of course, the origins of modernism are multiple and extend to the pre-war period, but, according to Vincent Sherry, the war drew “a line through time”, constituting a radical break with the past and thus enabling the self-consciously *modern* projects of modernism (113). The breakdown of hegemonic masculinities outlined above contributed to the ensuing sense of alienation. According to Fussell, the discrepancy between the horrors of the trenches and the heroic principles of civilisation that were meant to justify them resulted in an ironic disconnection between the reality of experience and the language in which it was described (*War* 3-35). Moreover, as Eric Leed points out, the atrocities of warfare surpassed “any rational comprehension” and therefore destabilised understandings of the civilised male subject (133). Eugenic discussions of the male soldier in which the subject is deprived of his individuality and reduced to a faceless and anonymous figure that, more often than not, failed to fulfil its purpose in a larger national context contributed to this loss of faith in hegemonic masculinities. Modernism’s occupation with the ironic breakdown of language, disorientation and alienation as well as the interest in a no longer fully autonomous self can be read as outcomes of the war.

In high modernist texts such as T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land”, the failure of masculinity depicted in the sterile Fisher King or the hermaphroditic Tiresias comes to signify aesthetic fragmentation and structural dislocation (cf. Gilbert, “Heart” 423). Combining both sexes and having “foresuffered all”, Tiresias is all-knowing, but perversely no longer able to convert this knowledge into a meaningful and potent whole (line 243). Tiresias’ sterility reflects the barrenness depicted in the poem as a whole, in which sexuality is no longer productive, but abortive, violent and, above all other things, indifferent. Lawrence was also painfully aware of the fact that human

sexuality had been emptied of meaning after the war. Like Eliot, he came to associate the breakdown of the sexual with the breakdown of representation, but his response to this problem was different. Seeking whatever meaning was left after the war in literary tradition, Eliot moved in an intertextual world. Lawrence, on the other hand, sought to reaffirm the sexual, the physical and the ontological through language. Like other modernist writers, Lawrence struggled with language, but he never embraced the dissolution of the physical world in language. According to Michael Bell, he “shared ... formal consciousness, ... yet never wore it on his sleeve as self-consciousness” (182). Quite the contrary, Lawrence continued to view language as a means to forge connections between the body and the mind. In “A Propos of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’”, he explained that “thought and action, word and deed are two separate forms of consciousness, two separate lives which we lead. We need, very sincerely, to keep a connection” (*Chatterley* 307). The question of how to forge this connection in a post-war world was the key struggle in Lawrence’s works of the 1920s.

Lawrence, Gender Politics and The War

Lady Chatterley’s Lover, most often read as a novel about sexuality, is concerned with the effects of the war, as the first paragraph reveals:

The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen. (5)

Like many of his contemporaries, Lawrence was preoccupied with the question of how to move on from the war and its catastrophic effects. He associated wartime with a crisis of the physical, the interpersonal and the sexual. Lawrence was a strong opponent of the war from the very start, as he saw it as the monstrous outcome of the already debilitating conditions of modern civilised society. In a letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith written on 15 November 1916, he explains:

... for *me* the war is utterly wrong, stupid, monstrous and contemptible ... And it comes to this, that the *oneness* of mankind is destroyed in me. I am I and you are you, and all heaven and hell lies in the chasm between. – Believe me I am infinitely hurt by being thus torn off from the body of mankind, but

so it is, and it is right. And believe me that I have wept tears enough, over the dead men and the unhappy women who were once with me. Now, one can only submit, they are they, you are you, I am I, there is a separation, a separate, isolated fate. (3: 32-33; his emphasis)

The war is described in terms of a violent rupture between the individual and his or her own body, and the body of other people. Lawrence believed that this lost connection could only be re-established by reconsidering the relationship between the sexes.

Lawrence's own understanding of gender roles and sexuality changed drastically over the course of the 1910s. At the beginning of the war, he still held a keen interest in sexual intermediacy and sought to strike a balance between the masculine and feminine elements that he thought were at work in every individual. This idea is particularly pertinent in his important "Study of Thomas Hardy", which was heavily influenced by the work of Edward Carpenter, and is only nominally concerned with Hardy himself (Delavenay 212).¹³ Lawrence explains that the majority of individuals "have bodies which contain the male and the female" (*Selected* 71). Lawrence embraces this sexually intermediate state and presents it as the prerequisite for artistic creation. In a letter to Gordon Campbell, he explains that "there is no getting of a vision ... before we get our sex right: before we get our souls fertilized by the *female*" (2: 218; his emphasis). The essay on Thomas Hardy itself was written in response to the war. In a letter to J. B. Pinker, Lawrence states that he wrote the book "[o]ut of sheer rage" over the "colossal idiocy" of the war (2: 212). This shows that Lawrence's initial response to the war was to call for a reconciliation of masculine and feminine elements.

As the war progressed, however, Lawrence came to embrace a different understanding of sexual politics based on male leadership and female submission.¹⁴ According to Hilary Simpson, "Lawrence develops in the twenties an explicit anti-feminism which is of a different quality from the more open-ended probings of love

¹³ See Delavenay for a detailed discussion of the relationship between Carpenter and Lawrence.

¹⁴ Even in "Thomas Hardy", Lawrence struggles to fully deconstruct the male-female binary. In keeping with the sexual ideologies of his time, women are described as atemporal and passive while men are depicted as dynamic and active. Because Lawrence is primarily concerned with a male subject, it is also unclear if he believes that women should equally strive for a psychic state of sexual intermediacy. However, as H. Simpson points out, Lawrence still acknowledged that women needed to be heard and should participate in the reconstruction of civilization in his earlier works (93).

and power to be found in his earlier work” (93).¹⁵ In a much-quoted passage from a letter he wrote to Katherine Mansfield in December 1918, Lawrence explains that “a woman must yield some sort of precedence to a man, and he must take this precedence” (3: 302). At the same time as Lawrence is developing the idea of male domination, his work shows growing anxieties regarding active women that undermine a superior male position. The dangerous active woman already appears in earlier novels like *The Rainbow* (1915), where Ursula threatens to destroy Skrebensky with her “harpy’s kiss” (444). Importantly, Ursula is the first *modern* woman to emerge in Lawrence’s multigenerational novel, which implies that there is a connection between changing gender roles in modern society and the production of active female sexuality (Cowan 131). The threatening vision of the destructive and sexually active modern female became more and more prevalent as the war progressed and these women were often explicitly presented as ‘products’ of the war. In poems like “Eloi Eloi”, Lawrence expresses not only the hatred of the male body (“How I hate myself, this body which is me”), but also highlights the fear that women might exploit the male weakness exposed in the war like “pilferers” (lines 1; 48).¹⁶ Another example of the violent female can be found in his short story “Tickets Please”, in which a bacchantic mob of uniformed tram conductresses turns against and physically attacks a man (H. Simpson 94-96). What emerges here is a horrifying vision of the modern woman that has grown frighteningly masculine and active during the war.

As we have seen, Lawrence’s interest in sexual intermediacy changed drastically during the war. While sexual intermediacy stood for male creativity and potency at the beginning of the war, it came to be associated with horrifying nightmares of male impotency and monstrously active women towards the end. Lawrence responded to this development by turning towards ideas of female submission, a development that was accompanied by his flirtation with fascism. It is this ‘Lawrence’ that is perhaps most familiar to readers today due to numerous feminist studies starting with Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*, which argues that

¹⁵ According to critics like Nixon, this shift occurs between *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, so during the First World War (4-5). For H. Simpson, however, even *Women in Love*, published in 1920, still maintains open-ended possibilities and does not force the reader to take sides (93).

¹⁶ See Gilbert for a discussion of the Magna Mater figure in the poem (“Heart” 747).

Lawrence sought a “reversion to older sexual roles” (242). Indeed, in keeping with the more general cultural backlash mentioned above, Lawrence maintained that to move on from the war, it was important to return to traditional figures of gender and sexuality. In his poem “We Have Gone Too Far”, for example, he encourages the reader to “turn back, lest we should all be lost” (39). What emerges here is a temporal paradox: to move on from the war, Lawrence maintained, one had to turn backwards to a primitive past that held out the promise of stable norms of gender and sexuality.¹⁷

Lawrence’s *novelette*, *The Fox*, depicts the struggle of re-establishing the connection between men and women after the war. Overcoming the war, Lawrence shows, is only possible if we return traditional figurations of gender and sexuality, but he also reveals the uncertainties underwriting his own ideas. As a result, *The Fox* is one of his least dogmatic and most uncertain texts (Renner 245). Exposing the shared temporal instabilities of female and male masculinities, it highlights that a ‘straightforward’ return to the past might no longer be possible.

The Struggle of Submission: Overcoming Female Masculinity

The Fox opens with a description of a barren post-war world. Two women have tried to run a farm on their own, but what should be a place of fertility and growth is disastrously sterile: the fowls do not lay eggs, other animals have run away, and the women are so afraid of birth that they have sold a pregnant heifer. The owner, Banford, a “small, thin, delicate thing with spectacles”, is equally barren: frail and old beyond her years, she is, in every way, ‘unfit’ to get married (3). Matters are more complicated with regard to her companion, March. Described as “more robust”, March has decided to “be the man about the place” (3). It is easy to mistake her for a “graceful, loose-balanced young man”, but emphasis is placed on the fact that “her face was not a man’s face, ever” (4). Stanley Renner reads March as an example of the New Woman, as she has claimed the same rights of men and has stepped away from traditional gender roles (249). But Lawrence ensures that we also question the

¹⁷ It should be noted that I am not concerned with the racial implications of Lawrence’s primitivism here. In his fiction in the 1910s, Lawrence showed an interest in Africa before turning to South America in the 1920s (MacClancy 83-84).

women's sexuality. March and Banford sleep in the same bed and there is no doubt that March has to make a choice between Banford and Henry. At the same time, Lawrence does not confirm the women's sexual identity as lesbian. This is important, as he had shown that he *could* write about lesbianism explicitly enough to attract the eyes of the censor in depicting the relationship between Ursula Brangwen and Winifred Inger in *The Rainbow*. The point is that Lawrence is not concerned with lesbian identity here. Rather, he uses the implication of lesbianism to construct a difference between an active and a passive female sexual role that is correlated with masculinity and femininity respectively. Female masculinity here does not necessarily signify lesbianism, but rather comes to stand for a turn away from an original passive femininity.

The end of the war spells the end of female masculinity. When the young soldier, Henry, arrives, he informs Banford and March that "there won't be any demand for women landworkers now the war's over" (16). The realistic description of wartime conditions grounds the story in historical time and ensures that the reader understands March and Banford's masculinity as a product of the war. Yet, the real conflict depicted in the story takes place on a psychological level where female masculinity is much more difficult to overcome. What is at stake in moving forward from the war is March's consciousness itself. Similar to Constance Chatterley, we learn that March has not survived the war unharmed. From the beginning of the story, she is introduced as a character alienated from the present and from herself: "It was a question whether she was there, actually consciously present, or not. ... Her consciousness was, as it were, held back" (7).

What happens to March in the aftermath of the war reads, in many ways, like a straightforward story of submission that feeds into the sexual politics that many readers of Lawrence's work have decried: March has to find her 'real' female self by submitting to the male principle, embodied by the mysterious fox that visits the farm and then later on, and more problematically, by the male soldier. Indeed, *The Fox* abounds with passages in which Lawrence uses the kind of language that understandably concerns feminist critics: March is "possessed" by the fox who "invisibly master[s] her spirit" (8). Later on she faces Henry with a "helpless, fascinated rabbit-look ... helpless as if she had been bound" (77). According to

Renner, the fox urges March to commune with nature, the woods around the barren farm, and to find her reproductive role as a woman (250). The animal comes to represent a phallic and primordial life force – he is compared to a serpent and March longingly strokes his tail after he has been shot – that promises to restore a lost womanhood.

Like many of his contemporaries, Lawrence was interested in the premodern and the primitive, an interest that is often expressed through symbolic animal figures. Lawrence's primitivism needs to be understood in the context of his writings on psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) were written after the war, at the same time as Lawrence was revising *The Fox*. In his writings on psychoanalysis, Lawrence takes issue with the negativity of the Freudian theory of repression. He opposes the idea that the unconscious is secondary, constituted by repressed feelings and desires. With regard to sex, for instance, he claims that desire is not the result of the incest taboo and therefore lack, but it is a force that precedes social restrictions. Overall, Lawrence promotes a vision of

the true, pristine unconscious – a very different affair from that sack of horrors which psychoanalysts would have us believe is source of motivity. ... The sex of which Adam and Eve became conscious derived from the very God who bade them be not conscious of it – it was not spawn produced by secondary propagation from the mental consciousness itself.” (*Psychoanalysis* 26).

The preconscious force Lawrence describes here is his much discussed ‘blood knowledge’, a knowledge of the body that predates the emergence of the intellectual mind. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence explicitly links the primordial unconscious to the body and the animal: “The primal consciousness in man is pre-mental, and has nothing to do with cognition. It is the same as in the animals. And this pre-mental consciousness remains as long as we live the powerful root and body of our consciousness. The mind is but the last flower, the *cul de sac*” (29). The image of the ‘*cul de sac*’ shows that the road into the future cannot be found on the level of the mind, but involves a return to the primordial forces of life.

In keeping with this logic, March's desire for the fox is repeatedly compared to “a spell” (10; 12). Her attraction for the animal exceeds rational thought: “She did not know what she felt or thought: only the state came over her, as when he [the fox]

looked at her” (10). March’s emotional connection to the fox and Henry is contrasted with her relationship with Banford. Like the fox, Henry speaks to March’s “blood” (28). Banford, on the other hand, jokingly wants to pay a penny for March’s thoughts and then feels she has “wasted” her money (33). Capitalist Banford represents a modernity in which interhuman connections have to be bought and can no longer be felt. She comes to stand for the overly conscious modern woman that rebukes Henry with the words: “Don’t talk to me about nature” (17). Out of touch with her own nature, Banford acts ‘unwomanly’, as she fails to respond to Henry’s virility in the same way March does. While Banford first reacts cautiously to the male intruder, she quickly starts “seeing something boyish” in him (12) and warms to him as “if he were her own younger brother. He was such a boy” (15). Thus, she misreads and fails to respond to his masculinity. But Banford is, of course, half-blind and bespectacled – she cannot see with her body and is blinded to the phallic force of life represented by the fox and Henry. Like Clifford in his wheelchair in *Lady Chatterley*, she presents a prosthetic modernity that, for Lawrence, signals the loss of the organic body, the knowledge of the body rather than the mind.

March’s struggle to replace Banford with Henry symbolises the struggle against the intellectualising impulse that, as Lawrence maintains, has perverted female development. When Henry first appears, March feels a sense of relief, she is at peace within herself:

She became almost peaceful at least. He was identified with the fox – and he was here in full presence. She need not go after him any more. ... Hidden in the shadow of the corner, she need not any more be divided in herself, trying to keep up two planes of consciousness. She could at last lapse into the odour of the fox. ... She was still and soft in her corner like a passive creature in its cave. (18)

Images of the primordial (the fox; smell; the cave; undividedness) are conflated with a passive femininity that Lawrence posits at the origins of development. March dreams of restoring a primitive state that might offer peace after the literal and figurative time of war. Even though domination by the male principle holds out the promise of peace, the process of submission itself is figured in terms of war. Henry describes his plan to make March submit as “a slow, subtle battle” (25). Metaphors of rape and invasion abound as Henry penetrates the isolated lives of March and Banford. When he touches March, she reacts with “hysteria” and feels “as if she was

killed” (29). March’s feelings for the fox and later Henry are thus highly ambivalent: she is both repulsed and attracted by him. This becomes apparent in her first dream in which the fox bites March and burns her mouth with his phallic tail (20). After Henry has shot the fox, March strokes the dead animal and is fascinated with its teeth that are meant “to thrust forward and bite ... deep, deep into the living prey, to bite and bite the blood” (49). If Lawrence maintains that women need to submit to a dominant male force, he also reveals that submission does not come easily to the modern woman. Indeed, the male principle is exposed as extraordinarily destructive. The peace of submission is therefore thwarted by the continued destruction wrought in the encounter between the men and women.

To be sure, the relationship between March and Henry remains highly unstable. Even after March has agreed to marry him, she changes her mind as soon as he has gone back to his unit and turns to Banford again. Even though she has attempted to submit to Henry, this experience has not proven to be restorative: “Instead of her soul swaying with new life, it seemed to droop, to bleed, as if it were wounded” (83). The wound of the war has not been healed and March never fully accepts a submissive position. Even at the very end of the story,

[s]he still felt she ought to *do* something, to strain herself in some direction. ... And she could not quite accept the submergence which his new love put upon her. ... She had to be passive, to acquiesce, and to be submerged under the surface of love. She had to be like the seaweeds she saw as she peered down from the boat ... never, never rising and looking forth above water while they lived. ... Beneath the water they might be stronger, more indestructible than resistant oak trees are on land. But it was always underwater, always underwater. And she, being a woman, must be like that. And she had been so used to the very opposite. (83-84; his emphasis)

The contrast between the images of the tree on land and the submerged seaweed is an important one. In *Fantasia*, Lawrence draws on a biblical rhetoric to argue that not everyone is meant to taste the tree of life. The knowledge it grants is the awareness of an individual consciousness, which is harmful, especially for women: “When Eve ate that particular apple, she became aware of her own womanhood, mentally” (76). March emerges as a modern Eve, as she “can’t stop having an idea of herself” (76). Through the association with Genesis, women’s self-awareness comes to be linked with the fall from paradise and the dawning of a modern age Lawrence eschews. The war, in particular, emerges as the harbinger of this new age as it allowed women like

March to adopt a male sense of self. In March's thoughts, biblical images and evolutionary models intertwine: the tree on land (individuality) is contrasted with the seaweed under water (collective unconsciousness). March does not know if she should give in or resist her desire to slide backward along the evolutionary line of development that led organisms from sea to land, and from undifferentiated organisms to individual life forms.

For Lawrence, this backward turn in development is, as we have seen, the prerequisite for a forward movement of civilisation, especially after the war. This perverse temporal logic was derived from psychoanalytic and sexological discourses on female development.¹⁸ According to Freud, it was only at the age of thirty that women's libido "has taken up final positions and seems incapable of exchanging them for others" (22: 135). Before this turning point, women passed through a period of latency in which they could also adopt a male position and desire women. Ellis maintained that female sexuality is "frequently either latent or widely diffused not to become acute sometimes until towards the age of thirty" (*Psychology* 361). While Ellis does not specify if women have diverse sexual impulses or no sexual feelings at all before they turn thirty, he is in agreement with Freud that women's sexuality changes from a latent or diffused – and possibly masculine – state into a more solid heterosexual femininity. Within a temporal framework that locates masculinity on a higher developmental stage than femininity, this implies that women have to take a step back in order to move forward along the trajectory of female development. Early in *The Fox*, Banford and March's age is described in contradictory terms: "They were neither of them young: that is, they were near thirty. But they certainly were not old" (3). This means that March is on the very threshold of female development. In accordance with a psychoanalytic and sexological trajectory, we might expect that she is just about to leave behind a period of masculine identification and turn towards femininity. But the contradictory description of her as both old and young implies that she might either be too old to turn back, or too young to settle. Since Lawrence

¹⁸ Renner comments on the fact that March is approaching the turning point in female development. However, his argument differs radically from mine as he concludes that March and Henry, who is approximately ten years younger, are both at their respective sexual peaks and therefore able to find sexual fulfilment with each other. Renner fails to appreciate the anxieties that March's age produces within the text (256).

conflates individual development with the development of civilisation as a whole, March's liminality once again highlights the fact that the future in a post-war world is anything but certain.

Unable to Move: The Failure of Male Masculinity

March's struggle to establish a stable femininity is mirrored by the failure of Henry's masculinity. While Lawrence asserts a phallic life force, *The Fox* is also a story about castration. The tree that appears as an image in March's thoughts also occurs earlier in the story. After March has agreed to marry him, Henry goes back to his unit. March writes a letter, explaining that she has been wrong in agreeing to marry him and that she will stay with Banford instead. Henry immediately decides to return and, upon his arrival, sees that Banford and March are trying to fell a tree on the farm. In a peculiar turn of the plot, Henry proceeds to kill Banford by felling the tree and 'willing' it to fall on her. As we have seen, the tree is phallic in that it symbolises an individual self-awareness that Lawrence reserves for men. If the tree Banford and March seek to fell is phallic, it is also impotent: the tree "was dead – it had died in the summer ... It was not a very big tree. And it was absolutely dead" (74). Since March takes the initiative to fell the tree, we might argue that she is trying to kill the masculine self-consciousness that keeps her from submitting fully to Henry. The fact that Henry is the one who ultimately cuts down the tree and, in doing so, kills the anti-phallic Banford might be read as an assertion of male domination. However, the dead phallic tree also signifies Henry's own masculinity. Indeed, the only reason why Henry has returned from his unit is that March informed him of his failure to force her into submission. Men who fail to win the battle against the active female are, it is implied, at least partly to blame for the very existence of masculine women in the first place. In felling the tree, Henry might therefore be trying to rid himself of the symptom, the masculine woman, as well as the cause, his own impotent masculinity. The fact that Henry succeeds in killing Banford might imply that he has, indeed, managed to overcome the modern and self-conscious female. Yet, importantly, the cutting of the tree is unsuccessful as it lives on in March's thoughts and her continued search for self-knowledge. Thus, the felling of the already dead

tree is exposed as a futile gesture that underwrites the failure of a phallic principle. The fact that both March and Henry desire to cut down the tree implies that they are both, in their own way, responsible for the failure of hegemonic masculinity.

The instability of Henry's masculinity also problematises his identification with the fox. Even though March instinctively identifies Henry with the fox when he first arrives at the farm, he ultimately fails to exert the fox's spell over March, as she remains capable of withdrawing from him. Even after she has agreed to marry Henry "[h]e seemed as remote from her as if his red face were a red chimney-pot on a cottage across the fields, and she looked at him as objectively, as remotely" (41). In contrast to the primordial life force of the fox, Henry is here not only spatially removed from March, but also objectified. He becomes a part of the distant cottages with their smoking chimneys, which represent a modern civilisation in which the differences between the sexes have been blurred. In this context, we also need to question why Henry shoots the fox. One of the more obvious readings is that Henry kills the fox in order to assume its mesmerising masculinity (Draper 188). This, of course, implies that Henry lacks masculinity to begin with and only kills the fox because he cannot live up to the masculinity it embodies.

The killing of the fox reveals the logics of sequence at work in constructions of sexual identity. The fact that Henry has to kill the fox in order to assert himself shows that he is secondary and defined in relation to a primary masculinity that is not his own. This becomes more apparent when drawing on Freud's association of the Oedipus complex with the totem animal. According to Freud, the son kills the totem animal in place of his father and, in so doing, assumes the father's role. Henry's failure to kill the fox and usurp the paternal role becomes apparent in the repeated allusions to his youth. Again and again, Henry is compared to a puppy or a cub. It is not just Banford, who, as we have seen, fails to recognise Henry's masculinity, but also March, who asserts that he is "[s]uch a long, red-faced sulky boy! That was all he was" (41). This implies that Henry's masculinity is underdeveloped and secondary to the masculinity of the fox/father. Henry is keen to obscure his youth and feels driven to assert that "[h]e was older than she [March], really. He was master of her" (25). Coming before, being prior in terms of sequence, is here explicitly perceived as a means of exerting power: Henry is March's 'master',

because the masculinity she claims is properly his. Within Jagose's framework of sequential logic, we can see that Henry's desire to claim an original masculinity serves the purpose of putting March's female masculinity in its place, which is a place of secondariness and derivation. Importantly, however, the original masculinity Henry asserts as his own can only be achieved through the killing of the fox/father, the effacement of yet another origin. The shooting of the fox thus exposes the volatility of Henry's masculinity and shows that neither he nor March can lay claim to an original masculinity.

Because the fox seems to destabilise rather than affirm Henry's masculinity, critics like Judith Ruderman have argued that the animal does not represent a masculine principle at all. Rather, it comes to be associated with the castrating powers of the devouring mother. This reading is interesting because it problematises the assumption that Lawrence had completely masculinised the primordial force of life and pays heed to the fact that many of his texts do, in fact, draw on the threatening image of the Magna Mater, especially after the war (cf. Gilbert, "Potent"). With regard to *The Fox*, however, this reading is problematic, because there is no indication of the fox's femininity other than its emasculating force. The fox's association with castration can, as I have shown, also be derived from a consideration of the animal's overpowering masculinity that threatens to emasculate Henry, because he cannot live up to it. Ruderman supports her reading of the fox as feminine and maternal by focusing on one of the revisions Lawrence undertook on the 1921 draft of the story.¹⁹ After Henry has shot the fox, he goes out to look for the fox's mate. Revising the draft, Lawrence makes handwritten changes that alter the sex of the fox's mate. Henry says: "'I think I'll go and look if I can see the ~~dog~~ she fox,' he said. 'He She may be creeping round'" (50). Ruderman concludes that "Lawrence conceived of the slaughtered fox, at least subconsciously, as female. He caught himself and changed the noun phrase to *she-fox*" (n.267; her emphasis). Ruderman's focus on the allegedly feminine fox and her committal to a heterosexual reading of the story causes her failure to realise the more obvious homoerotic implications of the passage: Lawrence does not alter the sex of the dead fox, but it is his mate that changes from male to female as Lawrence was preparing the

¹⁹ The draft is held by the HRC. It is mostly typewritten, but does include handwritten revisions that reflect the changes Lawrence made before publishing the story in its final version.

manuscript for final publication. In the previous draft, both foxes are male. Reading the two foxes as male allows us to focus on the way in which relationships between men are presented in the story.

That Henry's sexuality is anything but straightforward becomes apparent in his highly ambivalent response to March's masculinity. Like so many other male characters in Lawrence's works, Henry is repulsed by the idea of the sexually active woman (Cowan 130-132). March knows that Henry "would not have the love which exerted itself towards him", that is to say, active female sexuality (83). Watching March and Banford from a distance, Henry is disgusted that March helps Banford 'like a man', "manfully climbing over the bars with all her packages in her arms" (55). But her masculinity is also a source of attraction for him. Henry fantasises about March's feminine body, but only as long as it is covered by her "brown linen coat buttoned so close up to her throat. It seemed to him like some perilous secret, that her soft woman's breast must be buttoned up in that uniform" (57). He contrasts her body with "Banford's breasts, under her soft blouses and chiffon dresses. The Banford would have little iron breasts ... But March, under her crude, fast, workman's tunic, would have soft white breasts, white and unseen" (57-58). Paradoxically, the masculinising uniform of the female worker signifies a female body whereas Banford's more feminine clothes signify an unwomanly body. The strange reversal of the relationship between dress/gender and body/sex reveals that Henry can only desire the female body as long as it masculinised.

Henry's rejection of women becomes even more evident when he first sees March wearing a dress: "March was dressed in a dress of dull, green silk crape. His mouth came open in surprise. If she had suddenly grown a moustache he could not have been more surprised" (58). That March is indeed a woman is as surprising to Henry as if she had exposed herself to be a man. This shows that it is precisely her sexual intermediacy to which Henry is attracted, as it allows him to figure her as both a female and male object of desire. Once March has revealed herself as a woman, Henry rejects her and feels threatened by the idea of having sex with her: "Since he had realized that she was a woman, and vulnerable, accessible, a certain heaviness had possessed his soul. He did not want to make love to her. He shrank from any

such performance almost with fear” (65). The realisation that March is a woman forces Henry into a mature sexual role in a way that mirrors his own effect on March:

Seeing her always in her hard-cloth breeches, wide on the hips, buttoned on the knee, strong-as-armour, and in the brown puttees and thick boots, it had never occurred to him that she had a woman’s legs and feet. Now it came upon him. She had a woman’s soft, skirted legs, and she was accessible. He blushed to the roots of his hair ... and strangely, suddenly, he felt a man, no longer a youth. He felt a man, with all a man’s grave weight of responsibility. ... He felt a man, quiet, with a little of the heaviness of male destiny upon him. (59)

If women struggle with submission, men also have to force themselves to assume the active role. The depiction of Henry reveals that a heterosexual and active masculinity is neither natural nor joyful, but laboriously constructed and obligatory.

Just as female masculinity is presented as an outcome of the war, Henry’s conflicted masculinity and implied homoerotic attachments need to be read in conjunction with his role as a soldier. It is easy to overlook the significance of Henry’s war service as it does not figure prominently in the story, but this might be precisely the point Lawrence is trying to make. Henry’s deeds as a soldier remain obscure; the only time that we see him act in the role of the soldier is when he returns to his unit after the war is already over. The fact that he decides to leave March soon after she has revealed her femininity to him can be read as an expression of his rejection of women, whom he seeks to replace with his male comrades. Going back to the war is conflated with a regression to homosexuality. However, Henry deserts his unit as soon as he receives March’s letter in which she informs him of her decision to retract her agreement to marry him. He thus removes himself from a male-male attachment with his superior and his male comrades, and turns towards a heterosexual relationship in which he can take on a role of leadership in a heterosexual context. In contrast to British war propaganda, which often presented homosexuality as a German import and as a sign of sedition, Lawrence implies that sedition is affirmative of the soldier’s heterosexuality and masculinity (Cohler 86). The implication of sedition is further supported by the fact that Henry had run away to Canada before and was forced to return to “little and tight” England because of the

war (45). Through these subtle hints, Henry is exposed as a national outsider, which for Lawrence, who opposed the war, is a positive characteristic.

At the same time, Lawrence questions whether a return from the war is possible. In one of his most explicit homoerotic texts, the short story “The Prussian Officer”, an elderly officer desires a young soldier who is described in similar terms to Henry. In the end, the soldier kills the official in a bid to overcome the homoerotic bond. However, the young soldier does not seem to be able to leave behind his homoerotic attachment: the killing itself is described in erotic terms and the young soldier dies in the end to be placed – naked – beside the body of the dead officer. The exposure of the broken, naked male body of the soldier in a homoerotic context implies that Lawrence conflates the destruction of the war with male homosexuality and a failure of masculinity.²⁰ The same dynamic is at work in the horrifying depiction of the military medical exam in the chapter “The Nightmare” in *Kangaroo*, where Somers feels that the naked male body is violated and becomes laughable as well as “gruesome, with no life meaning” (258).

Henry feels that post-war England does not hold out the promise of a restoration of sexual certainties. Hearing the barking dogs that represent civilisation and warfare, he realises that the fox, the symbol of primordial masculinity, “didn’t have a chance” (45). In the end, Henry dreams of taking March away to Canada, hoping that the journey will make her submit fully, make her ‘go to sleep ... give in to him’ (88). Thus the reestablishment of sexual polarity is displaced to another country and another nation. Space here also signifies time, as Henry longs for a *New World*, a new beginning that paradoxically restores old certainties. Far away from England, “he would have all his own life as a young man and a male, and she would have all her own life as a woman and a female. ... She would not be a man any more, an independent woman with a man’s responsibility” (88). Futurity is detached from a national rhetoric, but it continues to depend on the overcoming of female masculinity and the re-establishment of male masculinity. Lawrence himself shared Henry’s

²⁰ Lawrence’s writings on homosexuality are, of course, notoriously contradictory. It should be stated that he also developed more positive ideas regarding the homoeroticism of comradeship. More generally, it is important to note that male homoeroticism did not necessarily imply the breakdown of gender roles or a step away from models of male heroicism. Quite the contrary, it was often seen as an expression of masculine comradeship that perpetuated a hatred of the female element and asserted a superiority of women.

desire to escape from post-war England. In a letter to Cecil Gray, he writes: “I truly wish I were a fox or a bird – but my ideal now is to have a caravan and a horse, and move on for ever, and never have a neighbour. This is a real after-the-war ideal.” (3: 224). While Lawrence himself escaped to New Mexico, it remains uncertain if Henry and March ever complete their journey. Suspended between the Old World and the New World, the end of the story might hold out hope for a new beginning or imply that neither men nor women can leave the war behind.

I have argued that *The Fox* undermines rather than asserts the stability of gender roles and sexuality. One possible objection that might be raised is that – no matter how unsure Henry is – the phallic principle seems to win in the end. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Henry’s uncanny ability to cause the tree to fall on Banford. Henry’s willpower is explained in supernatural terms: “The inner necessity of his [Henry’s] life was fulfilling itself, it was he who was to live” (81). Lawrence’s affirmation of the phallus seems to anticipate his male leadership politics of the 1920s. But this reading overlooks both the humour of the story as well as its generic complexity. Lawrence himself described *The Fox* as a *novelette*, a term he also used for other ‘long short stories’ he wrote at the time. Con Coroneos and Trudi Tate have pointed out that the term is “new/old” – it recalls “the disreputable form of publication towards the end of the previous century, the kind of soft-focus, trite romance” (111). Using this form in the 1920s is an anachronistic gesture and one that Lawrence employs knowingly. According to Coroneos and Tate, Lawrence’s *novelettes* are often “theatrical or portentous” as well as “fabulous and allegorical”, and therefore, despite their length, set apart from his novelistic writings (112). The symbolic dimension of *The Fox* has been discussed above, but the question that remains is: are we to read the story earnestly especially since Lawrence himself described it as “rather odd and amusing” (*Letters* 3: 307)? The humorous element strikes the reader as odd especially since it is a story about the war, violence and murder. But the smiles and laughter that abound in the text underline the uncertainties produced by the war. Henry smirks knowingly and laughs at the women’s inadequacies, but Banford and March also laugh back, so that we wonder if the masculine woman or the male soldiers have become risible during the war. Thus, Lawrence also undermines his own sexual politics: “one laughs *at* Lawrence as well

as *with* him” (Coroneos and Tate 114; their emphasis). The resulting indeterminacy of the story once again shows that the struggle to move on from the war affected both female and male masculinities.

4.3 Finding Miss Ogilvy?

Radclyffe Hall and the War

At first glance, Lawrence and Hall could not be more different. While Lawrence’s stance towards female sexuality and female homosexuality was contentious to say the least, Hall sought social approval of female inversion. Even though their responses differed, both were preoccupied with understanding the role of the masculine women that had emerged during the war. In contrast to Lawrence, Hall embraced the war precisely because she thought it offered new opportunities for masculine women to serve their country and be recognised as valid citizens. Hall would, of course, go on to write *The Well of Loneliness*, a novel that has been credited with forcing the lesbian into the public eye because of the public outrage it created in Britain (Doan, *Sapphism* xii-xiii). But in *The Well* itself, Hall shows that Stephen Gordon gains a sense of validation and temporary erotic fulfilment through her war service. We know that Hall herself was distraught at not being able to participate in the war herself because of her ageing lover Ladye and that she wrote recruitment leaflets to support the cause (Cline 74; Tate and Raitt 9). Friends like Toupie Lowther, who ran a women’s ambulance unit during the war, provided Hall with inspiration and fed into the production of stories like “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself” (Halberstam, *Masculinity* 84).

As the quotation at the opening of this chapter shows, Hall was dismayed when she realised that the female invert’s contribution ceased to be recognised after the war had come to an end. As Claire Buck points out, all of Hall’s novels written in the interwar years are concerned with the question of service, the question of how to “imagine a place on the inside” of national discourse (176). Hall came to view *The Well* trials as her own personal ‘substitute service’ to the country. In “Ghosts”, she

joins the ranks of the female inverts who have served in the war by drawing attention to the trials:

since I could not share your fine deeds & your hardships, to me England said “You have written a foul book – a filthy book about filthy women.” And many other things England said at the time of “The Well of Loneliness” ... things that for Englands sake, or yours or mine, are really better forgotten. (n. pag.)

Like the female invert who had excelled during the war, Hall was not honoured, but punished for what she considered to be her service to the nation. Similar to Lawrence, whose second novel *The Rainbow* was censored in 1915 because of its depiction of lesbianism, Hall became the victim of censorship for writing openly about female homosexuality. For both, censorship came to be associated with the experience of war and of national exclusion. While Hall – unlike Lawrence – never abandoned her desire to be a part of the nation, both writers understood themselves as national outsiders.

Drawing on the war as the point of origin for the female invert, Hall could simultaneously affirm the lesbian’s national and sexual identity at the same time as she could highlight the struggles of the lesbian subject. As several critics have pointed out, Hall was highly influenced by sexological discourses of her time, particularly Ellis and Carpenter, and she would draw on their work idiosyncratically to serve her own purposes.²¹ Given Hall’s familiarity with sexological writings, it is not surprising that her representation of female inversion reflects the temporal complexities outlined in the opening section of this chapter. As hegemonic masculinity itself had become volatile during the war and, as we have seen, came to mirror the female invert’s unstable masculinity, writing about the war offered Hall multiple possibilities in her attempt to translate the experience of female inversion into literature. In “Ghosts”, for instance, the lesbian marches in an army of men that have been wounded through the war either physically or psychologically. She is also aligned with men that did not serve at all and therefore fall outside of an affirmative national rhetoric. This focus on injured masculinities is, as Kent has argued, characteristic of a general shift during the war as a result of which masculinity came to be defined through “personal suffering” (“*Well*” 218). Hall capitalised on the

²¹ See, for instance, H. Bauer (112-142); Halberstam (*Masculinity* 75-110); Prosser (“Primitive”)

possibilities of this wounded masculinity, which she believed mirrored not only the female homosexual's experiences during and after the war, but also her more general psychological constitution. The rhetoric of shell-shock and trauma, in particular, is drawn on repeatedly in *The Well* to express and legitimise the traumatic experiences of the female invert, repressing her desires and fighting for existence in a shockingly alienating heterosexual world (Kent, "*Well*" 223-224; Medd).

Shell-shock and trauma also point to the temporal dislocation the masculine woman shares with the wounded soldier. The rhetoric of haunting Hall draws on in "Ghosts" as well as *The Well* underlines the shared experience of being 'out of time'. In *The Well*, Hall repeatedly describes inversion in military and spectral terms: in Paris, for instance, Stephen meets a "miserable army" of men that have been "stamped under" and look at her with the "haunted, tormented eyes of the invert" (438). What becomes apparent in such passages is that Hall sought to expose rather than obscure the temporal complexities of inversion. This is important because writers like Castle have argued that female masculinity was used in a bid to make the lesbian present and to render spectral a 'real' lesbian. Drawing on the non-hegemonic masculinities of wartime, however, does not allow Hall to firmly position the female invert in the present. Rather, it allows her to call attention to the temporal complexities that constitute female inversion because of the association between lesbianism and masculinity.

Contraction: From *The World* To "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself"

The *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* collection was first published in 1934, after *The Well* trials. However, Hall had begun working on the project in the 1920s and had originally planned to write a novel entitled *The World*. It was only in 1929 that she decided to rework *The World* into a collection of short stories (Cline 268-269). Several unfinished manuscripts of the novel, written between 1924 and 1925, and later reworked in 1927 and 1928, still exist (Cline n.200).²² Based on the surviving

²² It is difficult to date the drafts of *The World* in the HRC. There are four different typewritten drafts filed under *The World* in addition to a related manuscript dealing with a character called Paul Colet. It is difficult to judge which version should be privileged. I am quoting from the longest existing draft, which is typewritten and paginated. The page numbers given here correlate to the page numbers given on the actual manuscript.

drafts, we know that *The World* was meant to tell the story of an asthmatic clerk alternately called Stephen or Alan Winter. In the *Miss Ogilvy* collection, Alan Winter appears as a minor character in one of the short stories, “Fräulein Schwartz”, but from the remaining drafts we can see that Hall intended for him to be the protagonist in *The World*.

In several of the remaining drafts, Winter is rejected from military service because of his physical inadequacies. He is devastated when he finds out that he will not be able to serve his country:

A kind of horror seized him; he stood there on the pavement, shaking in the grip of his reaction. His stupendous bid for courage to ratify his manhood, his moments of spiritual elation, the peace, the sense of having all men now as comrades, the relief of cutting loose from common things – gone, all gone, all utterly wasted, he was just where he had been in the first weeks of the war, with the added bitterness of having been rejected as unfit to serve his country. (7)

Idealising the war from afar, Winter paradoxically associates it with peace, a sense of belonging, an affirmation of his masculinity and a form of escape from his mundane existence. Like Gian Luca, the immigrant protagonist in *Adam's Breed*, who can neither serve Italy nor England, Winter feels pointless because he cannot serve his country.²³ When the war is over, Winter reacts with dismay:

The peace, when it came, seemed ... unfamiliar and overwhelmingly sad. Something terrible and fine had come and gone for ever, leaving him just where it had found him. The others would come back, but he would not come back because he had never gone away. They would have challenged death and thus grown wise in life; they would be the masters of life! Great deeds, great aspirations, great giving and great taking, great goodness and perhaps great sin; but great, that was the point, whether for good or evil, while he had remained very small. He began to think of himself as a pygmy in a new world of giants – a little, inkstained pigmy, ... or what was worse, an object for pity. (16)

Here, the experience of *not* going to war is described in a rhetoric that was generally used to write about the experience of the front. It is not the war itself, but being absent from the war that emasculates Winter. Moreover, borrowing from racial discourse, he perceives himself as a ‘pigmy’, backwards on an evolutionary scale and

²³ See Buck for discussion of national rhetoric in *Adam's Breed* (177-179).

thus barbaric, opposed to civilisation. Winter suffers from the passivity and stasis that active soldiers deemed unbearable in the trenches.

As if to escape the feeling of entrenchment, Winter spontaneously decides to go on a journey around the world. As Fussell has shown, this drive towards mobility, the longing for an exotic elsewhere, was a characteristic response to the perceived feeling that time was standing still during the war (*Abroad* 5). However, Winter's journey comes to an untimely end as the longest surviving draft, which I have been citing from above, breaks off soon after Winter has boarded the ship. A different draft, in which Stephen now appears as Alan Winter and lives in the same pension as Fräulein Schwartz, ends with his decision to go to sea and to see the world, but this journey is not even begun. In the final published version of "Fräulein Schwartz", Winter's plans of going to sea are not mentioned at all.²⁴ Excluded from the reproductive futurity that underwrites gendered models of citizenship, Winter cannot move on from the war.

This failure to overcome the stasis of wartime is reflected in narrative contraction. Whereas the novel Hall had originally started to write was meant to establish a time line that lead on from the war, the expansive narrative collapses and the novel breaks down into a set of short stories. Hall's failure to write a novel about the war is indicative of more general concerns regarding the status of narrative in a post-war world. As we have seen, the war epitomised the breakdown of temporal order. The idea that time could be measured chronologically and that it would flow unidirectionally from the past to the present and onwards into the future was no longer perceived as a given. This also means that the type of realist novel that depended on chronological sequence and claims to be able to provide continuity across vast stretches of time came to be seen as anachronistic. Similarly, the *Bildungsroman* that pretends to impose order on the course of a life from beginning to end became more and more problematic (Moretti 229). According to Woolf, the

²⁴ In "Fräulein Schwartz", Winter is only a side character. Suffering from "chronic nervous dyspepsia", an even less serious illness than asthma, he does not even try to enrol in the military, knowing that he would be "the victim of his treacherous nerves, of his body that had failed him ever since childhood, of his horror of blood and of violent deeds, above all of his vivid imagination" (108; 121). Tellingly, Winter is the only character that feels pity for Fräulein Schwartz. The fact that Winter sympathises with a German underlines his own outsider position in the nation and reinforces the sense that he has failed to serve his country.

war forces the writer into modesty – all he or she could hope for in the aftermath of the war are “[f]ragments – paragraphs – a page perhaps: but no more” (“Letter to Gerald Brenan” 598). If certain genres ‘died’, the war also produced new forms of writing and encouraged authors to rework existing genres (Cardinal, Goldman and Hattaway 7). One of the genres that came out of the war more alive than ever before was the short story, which became more and more popular during the 1920s. On the one hand, the brevity and limited duration of the short story made time more manageable and continued to allow writers to create shorter yet continuous narratives. On the other hand, however, many writers took the perceived inadequacy of the novel even further and used the short story in order to explore temporal fragmentation rather than continuity or stability (Shaw 229).

“Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself”

The titular story of Hall’s short story collection, “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself”, provides a prime example of the uses to which the short story could be put in the experimentation with temporal order. Since it is arguably Hall’s most experimental and stylistically complex text, it is not surprising that it has received more critical attention than any other of Hall’s works with the exception of *The Well*. Another reason why “Miss Ogilvy” is of interest is that Hall herself presents it as a kind of ‘apprentice piece’ to *The Well* in her author’s note. Ogilvy, Hall, explains, is “a very different person from Stephen Gordon”, but the two women are also similar due to shared experiences in childhood and their war service (6). Since “Miss Ogilvy” is a story that is very much concerned with evolutionary logic, the idea that Ogilvy is a forerunner to Stephen is important. Moreover, it is worth noting that Hall authorises the story explicitly as a text about “sexually inverted women” (6). But what does female inversion signify here? If Stephen and Ogilvy are both female inverts, according to Hall’s terminology, Halberstam points out that they are also different in that “Ogilvy quite distinctly desires to be a man, whereas Stephen Gordon desires masculinity and female companionship” (*Masculinity* 86). Like Jay Prosser, Halberstam argues that we can trace an emerging transgender/lesbian binary in “Miss Ogilvy” and *The Well*. To be sure, “Miss Ogilvy” is more explicitly concerned with

the desire to change sex, and Ogilvy's sexual orientation is far less clearly stated than Stephen's. The relationships between her and the girls in her unit can, indeed, be construed as maternal, but there is no doubt that the prehistoric episode speaks of her desire to be a man *and* to find a female sexual partner (Doan, "Queer" 15). More importantly, perhaps, Halberstam's reading fails to acknowledge the difference in genre between both texts. With its narrative realism and chronological order, *The Well* is remarkably different from "Miss Ogilvy".²⁵ In "Miss Ogilvy", Hall plays with the clash between a realist narrative about the war and its aftermath, and the lapse into a fantastic episode on the Stone Age, in which Miss Ogilvy becomes a man. Hall explains that she "permitted ... [herself] a brief excursion into the realms of the fantastic" and it is only on the level of fantasy that the desire to be a man can be fulfilled (6). By staging the conflict between the modern and the prehistoric, the real and the fantastic, the whole story reveals that the modern post-war world – which is also the world in which Stephen desires masculinity rather than maleness – is limited to a much more volatile masculinity whose wounds are articulated through the rhetoric of warfare.

Like *The World*, "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" exposes how the war came to problematise feelings of sexual and national belonging. In some of the drafts of *The World*, Miss Ogilvy's father appears as a side character, where he works in the same office as Winter. Mr Ogilvy is thus placed alongside Winter and both provide examples of a failed and unheroic masculinity. On the one hand, this type of man is directly opposed to Miss Ogilvy, who does not shy away from the front, but takes pride in her honourable service. Moreover, Ogilvy achieves everything Winter dreams of: a sense of community with the other women in her unit and the feeling of mobility that, as Doan has shown, is central to Hall's articulation of a lesbian subjectivity that largely defies categorisation in this story ("Queer"). In contrast to men like Winter or her own father, who have failed to serve their country, Ogilvy's sense of self is affirmed during the war. In the opening scene, Ogilvy has arrived in Dover and is witnessing the dismantling of her unit. The ambulance car she has

²⁵ At the time of publication, *The Well* was received as a stylistically traditional text. However, the novel does challenge rather than reinforce a clear separation of Victorian realism and modernist experimentation (Green). Dellamora uses the term "vernacular modernism" to place Hall in relation to a more overtly experimental modernism ("Engendering" 86).

driven still shows the emblem of the red cross, the “merciful emblem that had set Miss Ogilvy free” (7). In an earlier draft, the relation between the symbol of the cross and Ogilvy’s sense of self-worth is described in even stronger terms: Ogilvy “was not thinking of the ethical meaning of the cross that still showed faintly red on the sides of her cars except in as much as it bore on herself, on her mind, on her brain, on her gaunt, ~~manly~~ body, awquard [sic] body”.²⁶ Here, the cross emerges as a signifier of Ogilvy’s otherwise strange, because masculine, self. The fact that Hall crosses out the reference to Ogilvy’s ‘manly body’ shows that the cross confers meaning to an otherwise strange masculinity. As a signifier of the body, the cross anticipates the tribal tattoos Ogilvy’s male body bears in the Stone Age scene. Like the tattoo, a symbol of rebirth, the cross allows Ogilvy to claim a new self-understanding during the war.

But unlike the tattoo, the symbol of the red cross is transitory and no longer belongs to Ogilvy after the war has ended. The very image of the car itself, a symbol of modernity and mobility, undermines the constancy of the self that will be offered in the prehistoric episode (Doan, “Women” 26-28).²⁷ If Ogilvy was able to experience an affirmation of her masculinity while driving the car during the war, the volatility of this newfound selfhood is exposed as the car is being demoted at the beginning of the story. Ogilvy’s sense of communal belonging and feeling of self-worth are being stripped away. As the war comes to pass, the recognition it offered disappears without a trace: “Wars come and wars go but the world does not change: it will always forget an indebtedness which it thinks it expedient not to remember” (14). Without the branding of the cross, Ogilvy is once again reduced to an anachronism just as the other women around her in their “queer little foragecaps and the short, clumsy tunics” (8). Back at home with her two sisters, it becomes more and more apparent that Ogilvy with her short hair and her commanding habits has no place in the post-war world.

²⁶ The draft is held by the HRC. It is handwritten in ink and pencil on lined paper and heavily revised in parts. The draft begins with the opening scene of the story, but then continues with an alternative ending in the Stone Ages. Then, the story resumes in the present day and concludes with another version of the Stone Age passage. The draft is partially paginated, but since the pagination is not consistent, I am not reproducing the page numbers here.

²⁷ Dellamora comments on the significance of the car, calling Ogilvy a “lesbian cyborg”, because her sense of self is technologically constructed through the identification with the car (“Engendering” 92).

In keeping with the rhetoric of the wound, we can see that the loss of the cross as an emblem of value and recognition constitutes the wound through which Ogilvy henceforth defines herself. But in contrast to Stephen, Ogilvy does not have a physical wound to give evidence of her war service nor does she find sexual fulfilment with another woman. Hers is a particularly volatile masculinity: on the one hand the wound asserts Ogilvy's masculinity, but on the other hand, its invisibility makes it easy to overread or forget it. Hall carefully contrasts Ogilvy's suffering with the imagined illnesses of Ogilvy's hypochondriac sisters, who suffer from "endless neurotic symptoms incubated in resentful virginity" in addition to "spurious hay fever" (12; 14). Moreover, the sisters feel compelled to talk about their symptoms and Ogilvy disregards "their mania for telling their symptoms to doctors, with their unstable nerves and their acrid tongues" (12). Faced with Ogilvy's erratic and aggressive behaviour, the sisters have their "revenge" by diagnosing her with shell-shock, a possibly imaginary illness and thus a sign of weakness rather than distinction (16). Only in not speaking about her wound – and thus showing the heroic refusal to complain – can Ogilvy assert her masculinity (Showalter, *Malady* 169). Ironically, however, it is precisely this refusal to address the wound that also makes it illegible and easily forgettable. Ogilvy herself feels that her "prowess was whittled away until she herself was beginning to doubt it" (16). Even though Ogilvy has served in the war, she is not in a better position than Winter because her war services have been erased without a trace.

Similar to Winter, Ogilvy decides to escape the feeling of entrenchment at home by going on a journey. Unlike Winter, however, Ogilvy does follow through with her plan. In contrast to a trip around the world, Hall has Ogilvy choose an island off the English south coast. While the decision to travel to the island is seemingly unmotivated, the island emerges as conflicted national space where the breakdown of Ogilvy's national identity can be enacted. Even though Ogilvy has never visited the island before, she feels a sense of déjà-vu as soon as she arrives. The strange feeling of belonging is reinforced during Ogilvy's conversation with her landlady, who not only runs the only hotel on the island, but also owns the island itself. The woman shows Miss Ogilvy a collection of prehistoric bones that were found on the island and which she has decided to keep to prevent excavations on the island. Ogilvy feels

a strange connection to a fractured male skull and is overcome with rage and grief. She concurs with the local doctor who believes that the bones “ought to belong to the Nation” (21). Ogilvy identifies with the broken skull whose wounds from the war – much like her own – have been forgotten and are not recognised by the nation. Her wish to reunite the skull with the mainland and to display it stands for the desire for an inclusive and shared national history that acknowledges her.

The space of the island, set apart from the mainland and owned by an individual, a squatter, rather than a community, comes to reinforce Ogilvy’s painful alienation from a secure sense of national belonging. But it is also a space that offers the promise of reconciliation: just as the island would have been a part of the mainland in prehistoric times, it holds out hope for a solution to Ogilvy’s feeling of alienation. As Doan has pointed out, the island operates as a liminal and transitory space, a heterotopia, in which the borders between male and female, national and non-national, fantasy and reality, but also past and present are blurred (“Queer” 78). As such, it is a space that might alleviate Ogilvy’s feeling of alienation at the same time as it problematises the very possibility of a final resolution.

Ogilvy’s transformation into a Stone Age man takes place shortly after she has seen the male skull. Ogilvy finds herself in a hypermasculine body – *he* feels young, healthy and “perfectly natural” (23). The prehistoric man belongs to a tribe, which holds him in high regard. His female partner recognises his masculinity and affirms that he is “the strongest man in our tribe” (24). The prehistoric past thus offers a secure sexual and communal identity, which also confers meaning to Ogilvy in the present. According to Buck, the prehistoric episode grounds Ogilvy’s dissident gender identity and sexuality in a “natural, primitive sexuality determined by instinct” (182). Like Lawrence, Hall turns to the primitive in search of sexual certainties that have been lost in the present. But unlike Lawrence, Hall uses the rediscovered past to affirm Ogilvy’s otherwise volatile female masculinity. In conflating past and present, Hall seeks to oppose the idea that the female invert presents a secondary and inferior masculinity by reuniting the masculine woman with her masculine origins. As Buck rightly points out, the aggressive masculinity of the primordial man not only justifies Ogilvy’s masculinity in the present, but also predestines her war service, so that national and sexual identity come to condition

each other (185). Hall would draw on a similar logic in *The Well*, where Stephen's aggressive outbursts come to affirm his 'instinctive' masculinity, which can be put to good use during the war.

The noble genealogy Hall constructs comes at a price: in grounding Ogilvy in a masculine past, Hall plays into the cultural construction of the female invert as primitive or degenerate (Buck 186). Following evolutionary logic, this backward turn or lapse into the past is accompanied by a racialised rhetoric. Ogilvy, as the prehistoric male, is described as "a little sub-human"; he has "sad brown eyes like those of a monkey" and a "bestial" jaw (24). Hall does not seem to be doing herself any favours here as the female homosexual is derived from a primitive and, one might assume, hierarchically lower stage of development. The projection of lesbian desire onto a racialised context was a much-used representational strategy in Sapphic modernism, as Robin Hackett has described in her study of *Sapphic Primitivism*. We might assume that Hall is drawn to the idea of a prehistoric masculinity, as it supports the model of congenital inversion she derived from writers like Ellis. But Hall's primitivism serves an additional purpose here. If Ogilvy is displaced from the present and delegated into a primitive past, this past is not one of radical colonial otherness, but rather forms part of a native Anglo tradition. It is important to remember that Ogilvy instinctively chose an English island rather than returning to the battlefields of France or seeking adventure in more exotic parts of the world (Dellamora, "Engendering" 92). The fact that Ogilvy is *at home* on the island implies that she cannot be deferred to 'an other' space, far away and at a safe distance, but rather has to be acknowledged as part of national history. Like Henry in *The Fox*, Ogilvy seeks a new future in another space (the island) and time (the past), but the island is significant for Ogilvy precisely because it holds out the promise of a restored national identity.

Hall's Anglocentrism seems very odd when read in the context of an internationalist and metropolitan high modernist culture of the 1920s. However, it does gain in interest when read in conjunction with late modernism's focus on the island as a restorative and specifically English space. Jed Esty argues that late modernism threatens to destroy itself by privileging the space of the island, which is a utopian space that *restores* rather than *unsettles* meaning. In Esty's reading, the

island emerges as an anthropocentric space, small enough to be owned, known and cultivated, and offering “insular integrity” (2).²⁸ Indeed, the space of the island seems to offer both a time and a language that is set apart from the disruptions of modernity of the present. The pastoral idyll of the island, in which the love story between the prehistoric couple takes place, is characterised by what Bakhtin calls “the immanent unity of folkloric time ... an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies ... and one’s own home” (225). In contrast to the mobility and displacement that characterises Ogilvy’s experience of modernity, where time is felt in terms of movement across space, prehistory offers a rhythmical time of nature that grounds the individual in a single place and thus offers a home. Like Adam, the prehistoric man names his female companion with the words “You ... woman” (25). We learn that the word ‘woman’ has “a number of meanings” (25). According to Michael Kramp, the multiple meanings of the word point to a plurification of sexual possibilities (38). However, rather than unsettle the terms of sexual difference, the multiple meanings of the word ‘woman’ (“spring ... of pure water”; “[h]ut of peace for a man after battle”; “[r]ipe red berry”) all reinforce a femininity that is domestic, passive and maternal (25). What is important is that the moment of naming constitutes a threshold. The Edenic quality of the prehistoric episode reinforces the idea that the words are spoken for the first time, which means that sexual difference is only in the process of being established. At the end of the story, sexual difference is violently reinforced when the Stone Age man rapes his companion in the cave. As the masculinity of Ogilvy’s prehistoric ancestor is defined against the femininity of his partner, the prehistoric episode is restorative precisely because it offers sexual certainties.

At the same time, we know that these sexual binaries cannot be maintained and Miss Ogilvy in the present is the living reminder of the loss of stable

²⁸ One of the best examples of this tendency towards the local and towards traditional Englishness is Woolf’s last novel *Between the Act*, which was published after her death in 1941. Towards the end of her life, Woolf was very much concerned with the possibility of a communal voice. In *Between the Acts*, she explores the dynamics of community in an ‘insular’ rural village in the heart of England. However, if *Between the Acts* is Woolf’s English island novel, it is also a novel about the war. The pageant play that is meant to unite the village community is disrupted by the sound of the military aeroplanes, which remind us of the volatility of the island and the safety it offers.

constructions of sexual difference. The idea of a return to primordial certainties is problematised, as the Stone Age man and his tribe are “on the verge of extinction” (Buck 186). The prehistoric man looks fearfully at the sea that surrounds the island and associates it with war, the coming of “[t]he Round-headed-ones” (27). He knows that he and his tribe are soon to be attacked by a rivalling tribe that has already discovered spearheads and thus belongs to the Bronze Age. The isolation of the island is broken up by the awareness of a spatial and temporal otherness that threatens to corrupt the idyll (Dellamora, “Engendering” 96). This shows that war comes to signify the threshold neither the prehistoric man nor Ogilvy will survive.

At the end of the story, the prehistoric male surpasses “his instinct for slaying” and dreams of a “home of future generations” (30). Through this anticipatory gesture, the genealogical tie between the prehistoric man and Miss Ogilvy in the present are once again affirmed. Yet we cannot overlook the negativity and irony of the ending: not only is the prehistoric man and his tribe about to be effaced, but Ogilvy herself is found dead in the cave on the island. A productive connection between past and present is called into question. Ogilvy’s anachronistic existence in the present is undermined rather than affirmed by the prehistoric episode. Even though she does travel in space and time, her journey seems to lead her back to an impasse, as there is no future after the war for her primordial ancestor either. If she does indeed find herself in prehistoric times, as the title suggests, the doomed ancestry she discovers not only affirms, but also complicates her national and sexual sense of self.

Because Hall points to the instabilities of female masculinity, Kramp argues that “Miss Ogilvy” problematises Ellis’ sexological models of female congenital inversion (38). Similarly, Richard Dellamora concludes that the short story demonstrates “the incoherence of this particular truth of male science”, which he describes as “contradictory and disabling” (“Engendering” 88). There is no doubt that “Miss Ogilvy” calls into question the construction of an original masculinity. Ogilvy’s leap into the past is exposed as a fantasy, and even if we assert that she does travel in time, we learn that the primordial cannot offer any certainties. But this does not necessarily mean that Hall sought to oppose a limiting sexological model of female inversion. Rather, drawing on a model of wounded masculinity made

available through the war, she highlights the temporal instability of all masculinities. On the one hand, this allowed her to depict the specific psychological plight of the female invert. On the other hand, it enabled her to place the female invert among an army of men that have been wrongfully disavowed, forgotten and left behind in the war.

Finding Miss Ogilvy ... Again

If the published version of “Miss Ogilvy” can still be accounted for within a sexological framework of female masculinity, the unpublished draft contains a radically different ending. It offers a rare insight into Hall’s idiosyncratic engagement with sexological discourses and once again proves that she did not slavishly follow established models of female inversion. In the unpublished draft, the first part of the story, set in present-day reality, is very similar to the published version. If anything, Ogilvy’s masculinity is brought out more explicitly and there are some more obvious similarities to Stephen Gordon that are left out in the published version. Like Stephen, for instance, Ogilvy develops a strong love for horses that expresses her alienation from society. The prehistoric episode of the published draft, however, reveals a striking contrast to the published version: Ogilvy does not turn into a prehistoric man, but a youthful, healthy and fertile prehistoric girl (Fig. 2).

As if to affirm Ogilvy’s masculinity before the transformation, Hall lists the content of her pockets, which contain a cigarette case and pocketknife, and reiterates that Ogilvy is smoking the “inevitable Petit Bleu” (n. pag.). These typically ‘masculine’ objects ‘reassure’ Ogilvy, as they confirm a masculinity she is about to lose in the prehistoric episode. When Ogilvy first finds herself in the shape of the 15-year-old girl, she feels alienated from her body and strokes the long black hair as if it were not her own. But then, quickly, Ogilvy begins to enjoy her rejuvenated body and feels at home in her new self.

^{she had} a Petit Bleu; as usual ^{these} his hands ~~rested~~ ⁱⁿ his pockets — ^{in her} pockets she could feel small familiar objects — his penknife, his cigar case, his pencil — and there every day things rearranged her a little, so that she gripped them firmly. But she felt strangely weary, so weary indeed that she flung herself onto the bed — not undressing, and thus she lay with her eyes closed, still smoking ~~her~~ ^{exhausting} ~~her~~ Petit Bleu. The inevitable Petit Bleu.

That was one minute, the next she was out of the house and walking on the island, only it was not an island any more, for one side was attached to the mainland. For an instant only she felt bewildered and looked about for the hotel, but the hotel had gone, a discovery however, which in no way surprised or distressed her. She was walking on coast slowly long that felt springy under her naked feet. A low brown breeze was lifting a strand of her hair, a long, black strand that fell on her bosom, she caught up the strand between small brown fingers, and stroked it ^{with some complacence} ~~complacently~~. She was young, just fifteen as the moderns count years, but she did not count as we do, she counted by ~~her~~ ^{her} native four periods ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ life, infancy, childhood, maturity, old age — and of these all she cared about at that moment was her new come maturity. Her body was small, ~~delicately~~ ^{firm & inclined to} ~~squatness~~ — she was feeling acutely conscious of her body, dropping ~~the~~ ^{the} strand of black hair, she touched it — her two little breasts were pear shaped. At the thought of her body she glowed but with pleasure, thinking

Fig. 2. Extract from "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" manuscript by Radclyffe Hall (HRC, Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge Papers; Box 19, Folder 1).

Following Teresa de Lauretis' reading of *The Well*, we might assume that the masculine Ogilvy recovers a disavowed female body in prehistory.²⁹ For de Lauretis, female masculinity is nothing more than a form of masquerade. If Miss Ogilvy dies in the present, it is because masculine mimicry becomes obsolete as soon as she has been granted the female body she lacks. Unsurprisingly de Lauretis' psychoanalytic approach has been heavily criticised by critics like Halberstam, who point out that it "condemns masculine women once more to the pathos of male mimicry" (*Masculinity* 102).³⁰ Indeed, de Lauretis' interpretation sits uneasily with Hall's investment in models of female masculinity and both the unpublished and the published draft of "Miss Ogilvy" resist rather than affirm the idea of a restored, stable femininity.

If we pay more attention to the prehistoric young girl, we see that even in the published version, Hall is telling a story of female submission that runs alongside the affirmation of the prehistoric male. In both drafts, the pubescent female companion reveals her desire to fight and to protect her male partner: "I will bite out the throats of these people if they so much as scratch your skin!", she cries (28). In response, the male "roar[s] with amusement" and reminds her: "You ... woman! ... Little foolish white teeth. Your teeth were made for nibbling wild cherries, not for tearing the throats of the Roundheaded-ones!" (28). Even though the girl shows the masculine instinct to fight and protect, she learns that this expression of masculinity is inappropriate. The impending war here does not offer the opportunity to affirm female masculinity, but rather reinforces sexual binaries that exclude women from war service. The fact that the girl has just entered adolescence is important in this

²⁹ De Lauretis has presented a contentious psychoanalytic interpretation of the mirror scene in *The Well*. Stephen is standing in front of the mirror and is expressing her hatred of her own body. We might expect that Stephen rejects her body, because it is not masculine enough, because it lacks the phallus, and thus reminds her of the experience of castration the girl undergoes when she first becomes aware of sexual difference. Unsuccessfully mourning this lost male body, she melancholically incorporates it and tries to become it. According to de Lauretis, however, Stephen rejects her own reflection not because her body is not masculine, but because it is not feminine enough. For de Lauretis, castration does not signify the loss of the phallus, but the lack of a feminine body (114-115). She argues that Stephen's body has always been rejected by her mother, because it is not feminine enough (121). Thus, the masculine lesbian body is perceived as shameful and cannot become the object of desire. This also means that Stephen cannot invest narcissistically in her own body, which is why she rejects her reflection in the mirror. This lost feminine body then becomes the object of the lesbian's libidinal aim.

³⁰ Prosser has also successfully opposed de Lauretis' reading by showing that Stephen's desire for feminine women is decidedly not *autoerotic* (Prosser, *Skins* 160-161).

context. She is on a developmental threshold with two choices: she can, in psychoanalytic terms, mourn and overcome the loss of her premature masculinity, or, she can rebel against this loss and melancholically incorporate a lost masculinity, thereby prolonging female masculinity into maturity. In the published version, female submission is accomplished when sexual difference is violently reinforced in the implied rape scene at the end of the story. In the unpublished draft, the girl's response is much more complex.

Ogilvy takes pleasure in her rejuvenated body and she describes the beauty of her youthful breasts, thighs, hips and hair. Moreover, she fears losing her youthful femininity:

Her hand went up to her hair which she loved with a sudden emotion of terror. But her hair was still long and plentiful and glossy. Then she felt her small swelling breasts, still fearful. They lay full and gentle under her hand, and the touch of them reassured her. (n. pag.)

Just as the masculine Ogilvy in the present day had found comfort in her pocket knife and cigarettes, the feminine Ogilvy is now 'reassured' by her body's budding womanliness. What is important here is that the girl has an awareness of her own masculinity. In Butler's words, she "carries the [melancholic] trace of the other" within herself and, uncannily, seems to have an awareness of this usually repressed otherness (*Psychic* 181). This means that even though femininity is affirmed, it continues to be undermined by the knowledge of sexual otherness, which has not been overcome.

This raises the question of whether the girl *remembers* or *anticipates* her masculinity. Does she fear she might lose her femininity because she will become Miss Ogilvy in the future or does she remember having been Miss Ogilvy in the past? It becomes difficult to tell if the prehistoric episode can be positioned in the past or if it lies in the future. While this question can never be fully answered and Hall is clearly playing with temporal order here, some of the differences between the published and unpublished version of the story indicate that the latter places greater emphasis on futurity. For a start, the prehistoric man in the published short story does not feel the loss of his masculinity on his own body. He has a vague knowledge of his own effacement that connects him to Miss Ogilvy in the present, but it is never explicitly stated that he carries the traces of a potentially prior feminine self on his

body. As a result, the prehistoric episode is more firmly grounded in the past. Moreover, in both drafts Ogilvy speculates shortly before her transformation if the disorientation she feels is due to shell-shock. In the unpublished draft, she explicitly rejects this explanation, thinking “no it could not be shell shock, she had never felt shocked by the war” (n. pag.). In the published version, Ogilvy wonders, “Is it shell-shock? ... I wonder, can it be shell-shock?”, but the question remains unanswered (22). Since shell-shock implies a traumatic return to the past, the decision to exclude the possibility of shell-shock opens up the possibility that Ogilvy’s time travels might also take her into the future.

The most striking evidence for this more optimistic and hopeful reading of the unpublished draft occurs at the very end. In the published version, the girl fearfully anticipates the loss of her virginity. She vacillates between “the longing to be possessed” and “fear” (30). This sexual anxiety is completely absent in the unpublished draft, which includes two alternate endings both of which lack the violent sexual innuendo of the published version. In one, the girl feels “a vast, infinite [sic] joy, that swept through the darkness towards sunrise” (n. pag.). The other ending is worth quoting at length:

He set her down, and they stood hand in hand, or they wanted to feel each other; and in their way then pass through the doorway of glory, with the darkening shadows. ... But within the dim cave, the lord of these creatures [the prehistoric man], had laid by his weapon and his instinct of slaying – grown gentle and weak with the instinct of protection, with the will to create new life. Yet the primitive woman who caressed his rough hands, working away the strain with her kisses – she it was who was stronger than life or death – ... [the] eternal, triumphant mother. (n. pag.)

As in the published version, the ending is characterised by liminality. But here, the implication that the couple is stepping forward, ‘hand in hand’, into a new beginning is stronger. Hall is directly referencing the final lines of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, where Adam and Eve wipe their tears and embrace “[t]he world ... before them ... hand in hand with wand’ring step” (xii. 646-648).

Throughout the story, Hall aligns the fall from paradise with the caesura of the war and she seems to imply that the war does not spell the end of time, but can be overcome. It is possible that she was influenced by Carpenter, who argues that the fall from paradise is purposeful in that it creates “self-knowledge” and thereby

facilitates moral progress (*Civilisation* 42). In this reading, the fact that Ogilvy finds herself in the war takes on a more productive dimension and leads towards a future. Carpenter maintained that the move towards a new Eden was dependent on a return to nature. Promoting harmony with nature, for instance in the form of vegetarianism, this implied that the human male had to overcome his aggression. According to Buck, in *The Well*, Stephen does give up hunting and exists in community with the animals around her (191). Similarly, we see how the prehistoric man renounces his aggressive sexual desire as well as his ‘instinct for slaying’.

In turn, the woman emerges as the more powerful agent. In the cave, it is she who is ‘stronger than life or death’. Hall might be drawing on images of the nurse that gained prevalence during the war, not as a submissive healer, but as a more complex figure that assumes a dominant position over the wounded soldier and “takes on a majesty which hints that she is ... goddess rather than suppliant” (Gilbert, “Heart” 435). Hall further conflates the image of the nurse with that of the Magna Mater, the ‘eternal mother’. According to Tate and Raitt, many women writers believed that while the war threatened maternity, the war could also “remake the world in terms of maternity”, which emerges “as a fantasy of tenderness and power” (10). The difference between the unpublished draft and the published version of the story with its emphasis on extinction and patriarchal domination could not be stronger. The questions that arise are what this alternative genealogy of the female invert might have offered Hall and what models she might have drawn on in her articulation of this genealogy.

Considering the difference between *The Well* and the published version of “Miss Ogilvy”, we can speculate that Hall was concerned with questions of reproduction. Doan has argued that Hall rewrites Carpenter’s evolutionary model in *The Well* in a way that allows Stephen to partake in a reproductive futurity (*Sapphism* 155-162). Stephen becomes a martyr figure, because she renounces her desire for Mary; in releasing her, Stephen facilitates Mary’s relationship with another man, Martin. According to Doan, Stephen acts as a eugenicist in that she pairs off the perfect couple and thus aids reproduction. Hall’s concern with eugenic questions is clearly expressed in the unpublished draft of “Miss Ogilvy”, where she draws on the figure of the Great Mother to offer a future for the female invert. Given that the

prehistoric episode can be positioned in the past as well as the future of the present day, it is unclear if the young girl is Miss Ogilvy's 'mother' or if Miss Ogilvy herself has produced offspring. What is important is that there *is* a reproductive line, a meaningful genealogy, which connects Miss Ogilvy in the present to a past and a future. In turn, the island emerges as a matriarchal space that allows Hall to search for matrilineal origins, but that also establishes a way into the future. In a story that is so concerned with the question of obscurity, the painful awareness of being excluded from collective historiography and national consciousness, Hall seems to find meaning in the prevalent cultural concern with alternative matriarchal histories, a point I return to in my discussion of H.D. and Bryher in the next chapter.

It is likely that Hall derived the maternal rhetoric she is drawing on in the unpublished draft from New Woman writers. Unpublished short stories by Hall as well as her early novel *The Unlit Lamp* reveal her familiarity with the discourse of the New Woman. More specifically, we know that Hall had read George Egerton's *Keynotes* and we can see possible influences in the "Miss Ogilvy" draft (Cline 176). Egerton tends to separate maternal and heterosexual desire, which leaves room for the dream of same-sex reproduction, reproduction without men, which is implied in stories such as "The Spell of the White Elf" (Fluhr 255). Hall does not specify Ogilvy's sexuality explicitly in any of the remaining versions and, as Doan points out, the bond between Ogilvy and the girls from her unit can be read in terms of a mother-daughter relationship ("Queer" 15). Since heterosexual desire is not fulfilled in the unpublished draft of "Miss Ogilvy", it seems that Hall also figured the Magna Mater figure as a reproductive rather than heterosexual force. Hall might therefore have been less concerned with female sexuality and more interested in finding means of renegotiating gendered models of citizenship. As we have seen, the published version of the short story motivates Ogilvy's war service by drawing on the model of a wounded masculinity. In the unpublished draft, on the other hand, she tries to open up a model of female citizenship based on sexual reproduction from which women like Ogilvy are otherwise excluded.

More specifically, it is likely that Hall derived the image of the 'eternal mother' from stories like "A Cross Line" in which Egerton describes the *ewig weibliche*, the eternal female principle.

Each one of them [men] sets about solving the riddle of the *ewig weibliche* – and well it is that the workings of our hearts are closed to them, that we are cunning enough or *great* enough to seem to be what they would have us, rather than what we are. ... They have overlooked the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman. (21-22; her emphasis)

Given that Hall exposes the painful experience of being ‘out of time’ in “Miss Ogilvy”, we might ask: what better way is there to bind the female invert to time, to ensure her longevity and survival, than to connect her to a primordial femininity that can never be effaced in or through time? Yet, as we have seen, Hall problematises the idea of an original and uncorrupted femininity, as the girl in the prehistoric episode is aware of the traces of sexual otherness. She knows of the temporally conflicted nature of the sexual self and, as readers, we do not know whether we should place her in the primitive past or if she is derived from Ogilvy herself.

While Hall was clearly influenced by New Woman discourses, she also struggled against them. We can read this as an outcome of the impact of sexological discourse, which, according to Sheila Jeffreys, led to a decline of the figure of the New Woman in the 1920s: worried by the rise of autonomous women during and after the war, the independent female had to be forced into a sexological model in which she could be explained in terms of inversion (207). Jeffreys reads stories like “Miss Ogilvy” as symptomatic of this development: in focusing on female masculinity, Hall takes the ‘woman’ out of the New Woman, thereby failing to “[t]ransform ... discontent [with gender and sexual roles] into feminism” (208). The unpublished draft reveals that Hall was much more indebted to the idea of the New Woman and the female invert *as woman* than Jeffreys acknowledges, and it is fascinating to speculate what kind of novel *The Well* might have become had Hall decided to pursue the ideas she had started to develop in the early draft of “Miss Ogilvy”.

The reason why Hall did not do so is because she felt that the New Woman had become an anachronism in the 1920s. Paradoxically, the ‘eternal mother’ had turned out to be not so timeless after all whereas the masculine woman had emerged as a more relevant point of origin. At the end of Hall’s novel *The Unlit Lamp*, Joan Ogden, overhears two young women talk about her:

Two young girls with bobbed hair and well-tailored clothes had come on to the veranda from the garden. ...

'Have you seen that funny old thing with the short grey hair?'

...

'I believe she is what they used to call a "New Woman",' said the girl in breeches with a low laugh. 'Honey, she's a forerunner, that's what she is, a kind of pioneer that's got left behind. I believe she's the beginning of things like me. (284)

To be sure, sexology is partly to blame for the fact that Hall did not fully embrace the New Woman, as she sought recognition by adapting sexological models.³¹ However, we also need to go beyond blaming the rise of sexology for the fact that the New Woman became 'extinct' in the 1920s. The main event separating the 'newer women' of the 1920s from the New Woman of the 1890s is, of course, the chasm of the war. On the one hand, in relying on New Woman rhetoric, the unpublished draft of "Miss Ogilvy" confirms that the women who participated in the war were "daughters of the 'New Woman'" (Doan, "Topsy-Turvy" 519). The modern girl knows that women like Joan Ogden are 'the beginning of things' like her. But the alienation the other girl expresses also shows that the war had created an irreparable rift between the two generations of women. Just as the modern girl disavows the New Woman, it seems that Hall felt like she could not reach back to a discourse developed *before the war*. In contrast to women like Miss Ogilvy and Stephen Gordon, who share the experience of sexual dislocation, the *ewig weibliche* ideal of the New Woman still implies that it is possible to be 'at home' in one's femininity. The fact that Hall stepped away from this model does indicate her indebtedness to sexological models of female masculinity, but it also expresses her desire to address the complexities of a modern subjectivity that emerged during the war. This was the subjectivity of the female invert, born in the war, but it was also the experience of the wounded male soldier. What connects these two figures is a temporal complexity that is at odds with the idea of an original or stable femininity or masculinity. After the war, it was impossible to be modern, to be in the present, without being an anachronism. The experiences of modernity and of sexual dissidence are, as Winning asserts, closely intertwined ("City" 19).

³¹ When it came to publishing *The Well*, she even went through great trouble to convince Ellis to provide the foreword thereby positioning the novel in the context of sexological discourse or, as Prosser argues, presenting it as a case study (*Skins* 157).

The different versions of “Miss Ogilvy” reveal that Hall was struggling with the question of how to write about female inversion. Comparing the different texts, it is tempting to believe that the textual evolution follows the evolutionary development from the New Woman to the female invert. We know which version Hall decided to publish and we can speculate why she would have stepped away from certain elements of the New Woman discourse. But since the unpublished draft is not dated and there was an eight-year gap between writing “Miss Ogilvy” and publishing it, we do not know for sure which version came first. Therefore, rather than privileging either one of the two texts, we should focus on the tension between the two, and read it as a sign that Hall herself was, as a writer, anachronistically moving forward and backward in a bid to find the appropriate means of articulating her experience of modernity.

Moving on from the war, the next chapter continues the examination of Sapphic modernity by looking at journeys in space and time. As we have seen, the war created a new experience of mobility for women like Ogilvy and gave rise to “fantasies of flight and freedom which animate the imagination of the 20’s and 30’s and generate its pervasive images of travel” (Fussell, *Abroad* 4). While the desire to move underwrites all of the texts discussed above, we have mostly been concerned with thwarted or delayed journeys: Henry and March’s journey to Canada in *The Fox* is anticipated, but not realised. Winter fails to complete his journey around the world. Miss Ogilvy does travel across time and space, and her mobility comes to define her sense of self, but just as she loses the car after the war, her journey to the island soon ends in her untimely death. Thus, writings about the war seemed to problematise the prolonged experience of movement and expansive narrative duration that I turn to in my next chapter.

Chapter 5

“Truant With Adventure”: Sexual Travels in Time and Space

... what happens when Olivia – this organism that has been under the shadow of the rock these million years – feels the light fall on it, and sees coming her way a piece of strange food – knowledge, adventure, art. And she reaches out for it ... (Woolf, *Room* 77)

Bryher first met Havelock Ellis in March 1919. She had turned to the sexologist in search of answers regarding her desire to be a boy and erotic interest in women. Surprisingly, the two talked about travelling:

I met Havelock Ellis and nobody could have been kinder to me. He broke the ice the first time that I saw him in his little apartment in Brixton by telling me that he was a sea captain's son who had made two voyages in a sailing ship round the world. I did not ask him about his experiences in more detail. I suppose that I was jealous of them. (*Artemis* 228)

It is difficult to understand why Bryher would be jealous of Ellis. It is true that Ellis had travelled around the world as a child with his father and he had later visited Australia and Spain, experiences he wrote about in *Kanga Creek* and *The Soul of Spain*. Bryher herself, however, had also travelled widely as a child. Moreover, as the daughter and partial heir of the immensely rich shipping magnate Sir John Ellerman, she had the financial means to travel anywhere she wished. In fact, it would be Bryher, who convinced Ellis to journey to Greece with her and H.D. in 1921.¹ Bryher's jealousy – as well as her decision to write about her conversation with the sexologist in terms of travelling – become more meaningful when considering emerging associations between travelling and adventure, female masculinity and lesbian desire.

One of the common features of the novels discussed in this chapter is that their protagonists cannot stop moving. In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf expands the narrative over different centuries and vast spaces to explore her sexually ambiguous and highly mobile protagonist. For Woolf, travelling becomes a means of exploring subject formation and developmental processes over space and time. Vita Sackville-

¹ For biographical information on Bryher, see Hanscombe and Smyers; Grosskurth (especially 33-46).

West, Woolf's inspiration for Orlando, would herself draw on the travel trope to problematise female development and to redefine marriage as a dynamic space of sexual intermediacy. Bryher was equally concerned with the question of development with which she dealt by turning to expansive narrative. In fact, she could not put an end to the process of development depicted in her autobiographical novel series, as she simply kept on writing: *Development* (1920) was followed by *Two Selves* (1923). Two years later, she published *West* and then, again, started to write "South", a novel that would remain unfinished even though a fragment was published in the literary journal *This Quarter* in 1925.² Through a comparative reading of Woolf, Sackville-West and Bryher, this chapter investigates how travelling across time and space served to point to the restrictions of heterosexual femininity and to facilitate alternative forms of development that deviated from prescriptive trajectories of development.

Compared to previous chapters, the following discussion spatialises time more explicitly by addressing questions of sexual development in terms of travelling. Even though culturally prevalent spatial metaphors of the journey or course of life map individual development onto a spatial background, these figurations continue to be preoccupied with questions of continuity. Is the self the self-same over time? Does the tripartite structure of the journey (departure, adventure and arrival) offer the possibility of transforming the self by stepping away from one's origins? And what limitations does the assumed teleology of the journey impose on the timeline of development? By focusing on different forms of mobility, my discussion also comments on the significance of the *speed* of the journey and investigates the dynamics of delay and suspense in the representation of developmental trajectories. Moreover, travelling across space came to be associated with the experience of alternative temporalities. Space always comes with its own history, a specific position in and relation to time, and female writers would explore alternative temporalities by moving literally or metaphorically across spatial boundaries. In this sense, moving in space can imply moving forward or backwards in time, or exploring the simultaneity of different temporal strata.

² Even later, in the 1960s and 1970s, Bryher would write two additional albeit less experimental autobiographies, *The Heart to Artemis* and *The Days of Mars*.

Travelling, Female Masculinity and Lesbian Desire

Travelling and, by extension mobility, have traditionally been viewed as masculine activities. Odysseus explores the world while Penelope stays at home; Aeneas leaves Carthage while Dido commits suicide. The conflation of femininity and immobility was reinforced throughout the nineteenth century.³ It was because of these gendered models of mobility that the New Woman on the bicycle and the female motor driver in the Great War came to be constructed alternately as signs of social change or of regress.⁴ Of course, women had travelled even before the end of the nineteenth century. Dorothy Middleton's study of *Victorian Lady Travellers* has shown that some women accompanied wealthy husbands on their journeys while others travelled on their own, for instance, in the role of missionaries.

Another group of women travelled as men. It is no coincidence that the cross-dressing women of the seventeenth- and eighteenth century were often sailors, soldiers or travelling actresses.⁵ These professions combined a marked public identity – represented by the uniform in the case of the sailor and soldier, and the actress's stage clothes – with a high degree of mobility that allowed women to maintain a male role. In reports on cross-dressing or passing women, the decision to adopt a male role was explained in economic and heterosexual terms. The female soldier, for instance, was presented as a woman who went to war to find her male lover whereas the actresses' desire to cross-dress was put down to economic need (Vicinus, "Sex" 473-474).⁶ This means that cross-dressing was narrated as a kind of adventure, allowing women to move away from their biological sex. However, the narrative of these women's lives also had to bring the cross-dressing woman 'home'

³ One example can be found in Geddes' influential *The Evolution of Sex*, where he discusses the difference between kinetic and anabolic energies. Focusing on cell metabolism, Geddes opposes the immobile (anabolic) ovum to the mobile (kinetic) sperm. Sexual difference thus comes to be explained as the contrast between the "active cell or spore" and the "more quiescent individual" (18). Geddes' concept of mobility displays the extent to which movement came to be seen as a gendered term that was not only reflected in cultural norms, but was also inscribed on the body itself (cf. Winning, *Pilgrimage* 57-59).

⁴ See, for instance, Parsons for a discussion of the New Woman and space (82-85).

⁵ On the history of cross-dressing, see, for instance, Dekker and van de Pol; Donoghue; Wheelwright; Dugaw.

⁶ Other cross-dressing women, like Julie d'Aubigny, the historical Mademoiselle de Maupin, were read in terms of gender and sexual confusion. But, as the discussion of Gautier's adaptation of her life in the first chapter has shown, clothing did not yet signify a deeper meaning or truth of the self.

by revealing her femininity and motivating her travels within a heteronormative framework.

Cross-dressing female travellers constitute an important part of modern lesbian genealogy, but the reading of masquerade as pure exteriority changes in sexological constructions of female inversion. This is apparent in Ellis' contradictory discussion of women who dress like men and lesbians in *Sexual Inversion*:

The chief characteristic of the sexually inverted woman is a certain degree of masculinity. As I have already pointed out, a woman who is inclined to adopt the ways and garments of men is by no means necessarily inverted. ... There is, however, a very pronounced tendency among sexually inverted women to adopt male attire when practicable. In such cases male garments are not usually regarded as desirable chiefly on account of practical convenience, but because the wearer feels more at home in them. (1st ed. 173-174)

Ellis first asserts that not all cross-dressing women are necessarily inverted, so that masculinity and inversion are clearly set apart. Then, however, he admits that many inverted women do cross-dress, but only 'when practicable' rather than because of an intrinsically felt desire. Contradicting himself, Ellis proceeds to explain that the same women he mentioned in the previous sentence do *not* choose the clothes out of practical reasons, but because they feel 'at home' in them. Here, cross-dressing is no longer a form of behaviour, but emerges as a form of identity. Even though it would take other events like the Great War and *The Well of Loneliness* trials before the lesbian subject would publically emerge, female masculinity merges with homosexuality to construct a clearly defined and *constant* identity.

If the lesbian is 'at home' in her masculinity, the mobility of cross-dressing is translated onto the level of psychology and narrative. In her reading of the Sandor/Sarolta Vay case, Gertje Mak has argued that the female invert – as opposed to the cross-dressing woman – had to be able "to tell a personal history, [and show] a capacity for reflection, and the communication of emotions and desires" ("Sandor" 71).⁷ Sarolta had been raised as a boy and was therefore highly educated, which

⁷ Charlotte (Sarolta) Vay was a Hungarian woman who had been brought up as a boy and lived as a man during her adult life. She became famous as part of a scandalous court case in 1889. Sarolta had married a woman, allegedly under the pretence of being a man named Sandor. Her father-in-law reported the deceit to the authorities and added that Sandor/Sarolta had cheated him of money. Importantly, Sarolta was not on trial for her sexuality, but because she had tried to pass for something she was allegedly not – for fraud and trickery. However, as Mak shows, the story was not used as a legal text, but as a medical text. As Sandor/Sarolta is pathologised, masculinity and same-sex desire

helped her to articulate herself and to fulfil these demands. As a result of the shift from the exterior to the interior, the literal travels of the cross-dressing woman had to be turned into a narrative of the self. Sarolta/Sandor Vay, for instance, had travelled widely and spoke several languages. This external mobility had to figure in her case history, where it was read as a symptom of inner desire. In this way, the desire for mobility came to be a defining feature of lesbian narratives of the self, where adventure is translated into sexual instability, the desire to move away from a female role. Because they were widely read and then repeated in sexological publications, stories of cross-dressing women like Sandor/Sarolta Vay provided influential models for later articulations of lesbian identity that would incorporate travelling and adventure as means to express or encode female masculinity and same-sex attraction.⁸

Moreover, travelling could serve as a metaphor for individual development itself. Female development was often presented as a journey that would lead toward a mature and stable heterosexual identity as well as the safe haven of marriage. The lesbian, on the other hand was supposed to be arrested on an early stage of development before she had reached the goal of a mature femininity. She had thus turned away from the appropriate path of feminine development and developed masculine traits instead. If sexual development is viewed as a journey, the lesbian is, indeed, a strange traveller: she stops at inappropriate places and takes the wrong turns. As we shall see, Woolf, Sackville-West and Bryher all subvert the alleged

cease to be seen as a temporary disguise and come to signify an identity. The case was widely discussed in German and English sexological publications. Ellis, for instance, includes a summary of the case in the appendix of the first edition of *Sexual Inversion* (317-324). According to him, it is “[t]he most completely recorded case of sexual inversion in a woman” (n.173).

⁸ Even though the interiority of the female invert was discovered, it needs to be said that the sexological autobiographical case study remained a predominantly male genre. One of the practical reasons for this is Ellis and Symonds’ lack of access to female homosexual correspondents. Allegedly, Edith Ellis established contact with some women, but while there are 27 case histories of homosexual men, there are only 4 lesbian case histories in the first edition of *Sexual Inversion* and the autobiographical material they contain is sparse. Earlier, Krafft-Ebing had encountered a similar problem. He not only had comparatively few female homosexual patients, but also commented on the difficulty of obtaining statements from them. This, in turn, made him depend more on their appearance rather than their self-expression (Oosterhuis 206-207). As sexologists relied on external behavioural or physical symptoms of lesbianism rather than women’s personal narratives, the connection between an externalised masculinity and female homosexuality was reinforced. The psychological interiority of the female invert was discovered, but because the lesbian rarely spoke for herself, masculinity continued to operate as a mask that allowed sexologists to *read* the lesbian rather than *listen* to her.

trajectory of female development by describing digressive and transgressive forms of mobility. Adventure here signifies the deviation from a restrictive trajectory of female development that leads towards a stable heterosexual femininity.

Before turning to a discussion of various practices of travelling, it is important to remember what James Clifford has described as the “historical taintedness” of travelling, the difficulty with detaching travelling “from a history of European, literary, male, bourgeois, scientific, heroic, recreational, meanings and practices” (106). Clifford’s insistence on the material and historically specific conditions of travel raises the question of which women could travel in the first place. Women like Bryher and Vita Sackville-West, but, also, to a lesser degree, Woolf, were all privileged financially and therefore had the means to travel widely on a literal level. Indeed, Bryher’s family wealth had been gained through sea travel lines and she would be an active traveller throughout her life. Because of their economic position, these women could also afford access to sexological and psychoanalytic writings in which female masculinity and lesbian desire were authorised.⁹ Through exposure to these materials, they learned about alternative models of development that they would describe in terms of travelling in their works. Indeed, the significance of travelling as a means to represent and encode gender inversion and sexual inversion needs to be understood within the context of a Sapphic culture heavily influenced by sexological and psychoanalytic models of development, which offered the inspiration for figurative travels that deviated from the time lines of ‘normal’ development.

City Limits

The European metropolis has emerged as a privileged site in discussions of female modernity in general and Sapphic modernity in particular. The European capitals, Paris, Berlin and London, were constructed as sites of liberation and transformation in which women could experience a hitherto unknown sense of sexual mobility. Vita Sackville-West, for instance, famously eloped to Paris with Violet Trefusis in 1918. Cross-dressing as a boy, Julian, she described this experience as “incredible – like a

⁹ See Doan for a discussion of the limited circulation of sexological texts (*Sapphism* 131-144).

fairy-tale” and stressed: “I, personally, had never felt so free in my life” (*Portrait* 112). Radclyffe Hall also spent time in Paris, but, as Laura Doan points out, her involvement with the lesbian expatriate community is often exaggerated (*Sapphism* xx)¹⁰. Just as Hall returned home sooner rather than later, Sackville-West’s Parisian adventure was followed by a swift return to England, which offered her a more stable life as an aristocratic, wealthy and married woman. While this chapter illustrates that writers continued to draw on non-urban contexts to problematise the trajectory of female development and carve out a space for lesbian desire, it is necessary to explore the possibilities and limitations of urban space first.

In the third edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis adds a section on Berlin to the first chapter (60-62). Drawing on statistics provided by Bloch and Hirschfeld, he argues that homosexuality is not only common, but also openly lived in the German capital. Through the comparison to Greece, Ellis nostalgically constructs Berlin as a utopian home for homosexuals while at the same time exoticising it as a space set apart from England. The same logic underwrites depictions of Paris as a modern Lesbos clearly distinct and therefore perceived as non-threatening to English national culture (Doan, *Sapphism* xi-xx). Hirschfeld himself facilitated the construction of Berlin as a utopian space, most noticeably in his popular *Berlin und das Dritte Geschlecht* ‘*Berlin and the Third Sex*’, published in 1904 as part of Hans Ostwald’s *Großstadt-Dokumente*. Hirschfeld describes a visit to the Alexanderplatz police station. “[H]och über den Dächern der Großstadt” ‘high above the rooftops of the metropolis’, in room 361, he writes, the visitor finds boxes with ten million pieces of paper, each containing information about a single individual living in Berlin (17). He describes how visitors come here in a bid to find information about friends, relatives and lovers of whom they have lost sight. For Hirschfeld, it is the very possibility of ‘getting lost’ in the big city, the anonymity of urban space, that facilitates the “Spaltung der Persoenlichkeit” ‘splitting of the personality’ (21). He proceeds to explain that the split or “Verdopplung” ‘doubling’ of personality is even stranger when an individual is a man here and a woman there, which, he asserts, is a common phenomenon in Berlin (22; my translations). The vast space of the city allows

¹⁰ See Weiss and Benstock for a discussion of Sapphic Paris.

individuals to *pass*, a term that, in this context, captures both the ability to change one's self, but also the fleeting nature of encounters in the city.

While Hirschfeld praises the possibilities of self-transformation offered by urbanity, his study of Berlin undermines this apparent emphasis on freedom. According to Sandy Stone, passing involves "the effacement of the prior gender role, or the construction of a plausible history" (231). Positioning himself high above the city streets with access to the birth names, and, by extension gender identity as well as home addresses of Berlin's citizens, Hirschfeld puts himself in a place where he can see through the multiple disguises of the individuals he describes. He does not allow them to pass. Hirschfeld's desire to remove himself from the city streets and become an observer rather than a participant in urban life is, as Deborah L. Parsons has shown in her reading of Simmel and Benjamin, characteristic of the *flâneur's* tendency to become uninvolved and to remove himself from the crowd in a "desperate attempt to retain an authoritative urban vision, which he attempts through a retreat to the detached and overlooking position above the city streets" (35).¹¹ While Hirschfeld constructs Berlin as a space of transgression, his writings paradoxically undermine this liberating quality of the city by attempting to regulate urban space.

Tim Armstrong maintains that Hirschfeld's Berlin emerged as an important site of modernism (*Technology* 166). Writers like Robert McAlmon, Christopher Isherwood and Djuna Barnes were in direct contact with Hirschfeld and his institute during their stay in the city. Barnes in particular has come to represent the conflation of lesbianism and urbanity. *Nightwood*, for instance, set largely in Paris, deflates Hirschfeld's desire to gain an authoritative view over the city. The novel does not allow its readers to pull away from the labyrinthine discourse that is all surface and no depth, a discourse that betrays no deeper meaning or original truth. The main character, Robin Vote, is nomadic in her crossings of space and time, gender, sexuality and class (Schwab). Knowing the city instinctively, like the animal or sleepwalker to which she is repeatedly compared, she does not rely on a map or

¹¹ Parsons traces the evolution of the *flâneur* through Benjamin's work. In his second essay on Baudelaire, she witnesses the shift away from the 'man of the crowd' to the man who "retreats away from the crowd of the street, in an attempt to retain a certain individual control and self-order over the chaos of the city street" (35-36).

routes that can be traced. Like the child, she is not yet conscious of any fixed subject position; she remains unavailable in the present, which also makes her indefinable in terms of gender, sex and sexuality. But nomadism is not the only form of mobility described in the novel. Nora is related to Robin by means of contrast: if Robin is a creature of the night, Nora belongs to the day. She remains “a foreigner repeating words in an unknown tongue, uncertain of what they may mean” (Barnes 51). Nora is not a nomad, but a “tourist”, failing to remove herself from the maps and routes she knows. As such, she is also incapable of following Robin into and through the night (Parsons 181).¹²

Woolf’s writings on urban space from the mid-twenties, such as *Mrs Dalloway* or “Streethaunting: A London Adventure”, offer a more positive image of urban space. The title of Woolf’s essay is paradoxical in that haunting implies an undoing of the self, whereas adventure has a more productive dimension, implying chance encounters, enjoyment and discovery. For Woolf, the two are closely intertwined, as it is the anonymity of urban space, the shedding of “the self our friends know us by”, that facilitates the experience of adventure in the first place (“Haunting” 155). The streetwalker feels that “we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run” (“Haunting” 161). This anticipates the biographer’s realisation in *Orlando* that “[d]ifferent though the sexes are, they intermix” (181). Orlando escapes the drawing room where she has to serve tea to Alexander Pope by cross-dressing and walking through the nocturnal streets of eighteenth-century London. Here, she meets and befriends a group of prostitutes, soon revealing herself to be a woman, and thus repeatedly transgressing the borders of gender, sexuality and also class. While Woolf figures the city as a space of sexual transgression, her depiction differs from that of Barnes, as her streetwalker is not only at home in London, but also safely returns home after her city adventure.¹³ Moreover, Woolf’s

¹² According to Caselli, the novel’s complex representation of mobility places it uneasily between a modernist positionality that affirms exile as a privileged site of experience, and a postmodern nomadology that radically negates positionality and thus, paradoxically, creates yet another all-knowing subject position (155; 174).

¹³ Parsons has shown how the *flâneuse*, the female *flâneur*, evolves out of a reappropriation of the Baudelarian *passante* (72-73). Combining feminine and masculine attributes, the *passante* is enigmatic and fleeting, but she also moves confidently in the public sphere and, shockingly, returns the gaze of the male *flâneur*. According to Parsons, writers like Richardson and Woolf construct the *passante* by reversing the terms of observer and observant and portraying the way in which the female

flaneuse needs an alibi for her travels around the city – she goes out to buy a pen or flowers – which places her within a bourgeois logic that no longer applies to characters like Robin Vote. This greater sense of stability also implies that, for Woolf, the unsettling experiences of city life, which ‘shock’ the streetwalker out of a complacent sense of stability, can nevertheless still be incorporated into the self rather than dissolving the self.

In contrast to Barnes and Woolf, Bryher tended to turn away from urban space. According to Sylvia Beach, “Bryher disliked cities ... [s]he shunned crowds, was no frequenter of cafes, and was very retiring” (99).¹⁴ In *West*, Bryher presents New York as an awesome, but ultimately “barbaric” monstrosity, and *Two Selves* contains descriptions of the eerie stillness of a primordial London during the Great War (23). Bryher’s relationship with Berlin was more complex: she visited the city several times a year during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In *Heart of Artemis*, she explains that she found Berlin “easier and nearer” than any other city she had lived in, because of her German ancestry and the fact that she had visited the city as a child, but she also expresses her desire to maintain a distance from Berlin (297). While Bryher came to associate Berlin with psychoanalysis and cinema, she explicitly rejected Hirschfeld’s subculture (Marcus, *Muse* 325-343). In a letter to Kenneth Macpherson written in April 1933, while she was staying in Switzerland, Bryher comments on one of Hirschfeld’s magazines that her friend Karla Modern had sent her:

... quite unbelievably porno, with pictures of old dames in trousers with glued on beards, living with old gentlemen done up not in dresses as in the extraordinary garb of many petticoats and stiff necked blouses affected by lodging house dames of last century. Marked “a happy marriage.” And pages of advertisements, well born gentleman who has never worn other than skirts hopes to meet etc. I simply cannot credit eyes nor ears. (H.D. et al. 166)¹⁵

Bryher’s response to Hirschfeld’s Berlin expresses her alienation from what she perceives as an excessive visual display of sexual dissidence. Her insistence on the

street-walker perceives the city, thus creating the *flaneuse* (74). See Bowlby for discussion of the *flaneuse* in Woolf (*Destinations* 191-219).

¹⁴ See Winning for discussion of Bryher’s relationship with Paris (“City” 23-24).

¹⁵ It is ironic that the letter was written just over a month before Hirschfeld’s institute was raided by the Nazis in early May. Parts of the massive archive were burned while lists containing the names of members and patients of the institute were confiscated, thus putting a firm end to the freedom and anonymity Hirschfeld’s Berlin promised.

artificiality of cross-dressing ('glued on beards'; 'extraordinary garb of many petticoats'), reveals her desire to set herself apart from a subculture, which is pathologised in her comments. By extension, Bryher seems to imply that her own masculinity is *less* superficial than the one of the cross-dressing 'old dames'. She thus distances herself from the "*sartorial* stigmata of 'inversion'", which here comes to be associated with urbanity (Garber 135; her emphasis).

Bryher's feeling of alienation in an urban context is reflected in her search for metaphors of travelling that take her outside of the city and away from modern experiences of mobility including that of the motorcar. As we shall see, Bryher translates travelling into a model of individual development and thus interiorises what she perceives as the superficial urban adventures of cross-dressing. Much more at home in the city, Woolf explores different forms of transportation in *Orlando*. In a much-discussed scene at the end of the novel, Orlando drives a motorcar and, due to the speed of acceleration, experiences all of her previous selves almost in an instant. Overwhelmed by the new sensation, Orlando forgets to call her own name and thus momentarily frees herself from the restrictive "true self" or "Captain self" (296). Woolf implies that it is the speed of the modern age that allows us to step away from the fiction of a single self – and also a single sexed self. The 'Captain self' makes its appearance earlier in the novel in the form of Captain Nicholas Benedict Bartolus, whom Orlando encounters on her passage from Turkey back to England. It is on the boat the Captain commands that Orlando's sex change comes into effect, which raises the question of what space and time the boat offers Woolf in the depiction of sexual transformation.

***Orlando* and 'The Captain Self'**

Unlike any other of her works, *Orlando* reveals that Woolf was well-versed in sexological and psychoanalytic writings of her time. Even though her engagement with these discourses was largely satirical, it nevertheless revealed that Woolf was seriously preoccupied with questions of sexual development (Marcus, *Woolf* 131). Orlando allegedly turns into a woman during the night of the revolution in Constantinople, but the mirror scene in which Orlando's sex change is first revealed

to the reader is frustratingly unrevealing: the pronouns slip, allegorical personifications of Chastity, Modesty and Purity obscure the view, and the biographer is too coy to take a proper look. The elaborate play with visual indeterminacy in *Orlando* can be seen as a direct attack on sexological models of inversion. The idea of a female soul in a male body or vice versa is led *ad absurdum* in a text that allows no clear view of the sexed body and exposes gender as a social construct. Radicalising Carlyle's idea that clothing is all there is, Woolf exposes the sexologists' paradoxical desire to see clothing as an expression of a 'true self' while, at the same time, insisting on a visible physical sexual difference, sometimes through an explicit misreading of *Sartor Resartus*.¹⁶ Woolf satirises the scientific gaze that seeks to elicit the truth of sex and, as a result, leaves the reader questioning: has Orlando changed sex at all or is he now masquerading as a woman? Or has Orlando been a woman all along and was masquerading as a boy? Woolf also unsettles sexual norms. The biographer speculates that Orlando might have married a female gypsy during the night of the revolution, but since the timing of events remains unclear, it is impossible to say if Orlando changes sex before, after or during the marriage is consummated, so that sexual classifications become problematic (Hovey 399).

In displacing Orlando's transgressions onto an effeminate and seductively mysterious Orient, Woolf feeds into a discourse of Orientalism. But by exposing that the Orient is like the sexed body in that they are both products of the imagination, she also satirises "the mapping of gender onto the colonial adventure" (K. Lawrence 264).¹⁷ The present-day biographer, who describes the sex change, is not only temporally removed, but also spatially distant from Constantinople, which makes it "necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to use the imagination" (115). This not only makes the reader question the veracity of the report of Orlando's sex change, but also highlights that there is no objective view of the Orient. The Orient does not reveal its secret just as the revelation scene of Orlando's body satirises the desire to

¹⁶ Hirschfeld coined the term 'transvestism' in his 1910 study *Transvestites and the Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*. In it, he praises Carlyle for realising "that the kind of costume is not the chosen expression of an arbitrary mood, but rather is a form of expression of the inner personality as a valid symbol" (124). Seeing clothing not as a transient disguise, but as a direct expression of soul, Hirschfeld misreads Carlyle for whom clothes do not disguise an underlying meaning. Presenting the cross-dresser as a woman dressing as a man and vice versa, Hirschfeld continues to assert the transvestite's physical sex, thus, as Garber puts it, "look[ing] *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser ... to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders" (xxiii; her emphasis).

¹⁷ See Kaivola and Hurley for a discussion of race and sexuality in *Orlando*.

see and know a singular and stable sex. Like the body, the Orient resists the inscription of sexual difference. The Turkish gypsies believe that clothes “can be worn indifferently by either sex” (134).

Because Orlando joins the gypsies, the effects of the sex change are delayed and the reader is left wondering if such a change did, in fact, occur. Before boarding the ship back to England, Orlando “had scarcely given her sex a thought” (147). It is during the long sea journey back to England that Orlando first considers the implications of her sex change. Woolf’s choice of the boat as a space of sexual transformation is an interesting one. At the end of his essay “Other Spaces”, Foucault introduces the boat as “the heterotopia *par excellence*” (27; his emphasis):

... if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself, and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development ... but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. ... In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates. (27)

Foucault presents the boat as an unsolicited space of the imagination and of adventure. The boat crosses the borders of East and West and makes a stop at several ports, but it does not fully belong to any one place. The reference to brothels also shows that the boat is a space of erotic transgression. To a certain degree, Woolf’s depiction of the boat seems to align with the image Foucault offers. Orlando spends her time on the ship deep in thought: she considers the implications of her sex change, and wavers between wanting to return to the gypsies and accepting her female role. Orlando’s erotic desires also shift and the name of the ship, *The Enamoured Lady*, is ambivalent. On the one hand, Orlando has lesbian daydreams of Sasha.¹⁸ On the other hand, Orlando herself enjoys the male attention she receives from the sailors and the Captain. The boat, suspended between a point of departure and arrival, comes to signify a space of sexual intermediacy where Orlando can

¹⁸ Considering the erotics of distance articulated in Woolf and Sackville-West’s letters, written while Sackville-West was travelling in Persia, this lesbian reading is underlined by the fact that Woolf brings Orlando/Sackville-West home *as a woman*. Hankins discusses the erotic dynamics of Woolf and Sackville-West’s letters (185-191).

experience sexual vacillation: “she was man; she was woman; ... [i]t was a most bewildering and whirling state of mind to be in” (152).

The slow speed of the ship journey allows Woolf to expand Orlando’s experience of liminal sexuality and to expose the constructed nature of female sexual identity. Writing about Orlando’s sex change, the biographer points out that “[i]t took her the entire length of the voyage to moralize out the meaning of her start, and so, at her own pace, we will follow her” (148). The stretched-out boat journey affords Woolf plenty of time to highlight that Orlando’s femininity is neither natural nor immediate, but circuitous. The moment of Orlando’s sex change at the age of thirty resembles the trajectory of female development described by Freud and Ellis, in which a period of ‘boyhood’ is overcome in favour of a mature female sexual identity (Bowlby, “Introduction” xlv). Woolf plays with these models of female development as Orlando turns into a woman at the age of thirty, but the process of maturation is delayed through the long journey. Moreover, the social microcosm of the boat allows Woolf to expose that femininity is a social construct. Orlando learns the implications of her sex change through the way she is treated by the gallant yet voyeuristic male crew members.

To further emphasise the liminality of Orlando’s experience, Woolf reveals that Orlando still dwells in Turkey in her thoughts. The nomadic time of the gypsies, which is not grounded in past certainties of sexual and aristocratic genealogies, offers Orlando an alternative to the patriarchal time of “ownership, conquest, status” and sexual difference embodied by the Captain of the ship (Bowlby, “Introduction” xli). Bringing together the time of the East and the West, the boat emerges as a heterochronic space. It offers multiple sexual and temporal possibilities, which problematise the allegedly straightforward line of female sexual development.

However, Woolf also complicates Foucault’s rather utopian concept of the boat.¹⁹ For Woolf, the boat is not ‘a place without a place’ or a time without a time, but rather a space that is fully embedded in the intertwined discourses of patriarchy

¹⁹ Foucault sets heterotopias apart from utopias on the ground that the latter are “sites with no real place” (“Spaces”, 24). Paradoxically, he later describes the heterotopic boat as a ‘place without a place’, which reads very much like a ‘site with no real place’. Indeed, the boat takes on a utopian dimension in his description, as it seems to transgress hegemonic power.

and imperialism. The Captain repeatedly interrupts Orlando's thoughts at crucial moments: when Orlando thinks about returning to the gypsies, because she is "not sure to which [sex] she belonged", the Captain 'awakens' her to take her ashore (152). The Captain can be read as a representative of Woolf's patriarchal time, a time that insists on singular, linear histories and is structured chronologically, leaving no room for the "time on the mind", as Orlando's biographer puts it (95). The Captain repeatedly reminds Orlando of their whereabouts as well as the ship's itinerary, thus forcing her to leave behind the freedom of the East with its promise of sexual transgression. The 'Captain self' he forces Orlando to assemble is heterosexual and female.

The itinerary of the boat's journey comes to stand for the clearly mapped out course of female sexual development, which is reinforced through a patriarchal system. Woolf had used the boat journey as a metaphor for female development before, in her novel *The Voyage Out*. At the outset, the tone of the voyage is joyful and optimistic as the name of the ship, the *Euphrosyne* ('joyfulness'), indicates. While the *Euphrosyne* first appears as the "personification ... of a utopian fantasy of female freedom, power, and autonomy", it soon becomes apparent that the dream of autonomy is thwarted by the directionality of the journey (Dekoven 102).

She [the *Euphrosyne*] was more lonely than the caravan crossing the desert; she was infinitely more mysterious, moving by her own power and sustained by her own resources. The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, worshipped and felt as a symbol. (25)

While the ship is first compared to a nomadic caravan, inscrutable and self-sustained, it soon enters a patriarchal trajectory that leads towards marriage or, in *The Voyage Out*, death.

Of course, Rachel and Orlando are quite different travellers and if *The Voyage Out* highlights the tragic restrictions of patriarchal society, *Orlando* playfully undermines them.²⁰ For a start, Orlando initiates her own return to England, even paying for it with her pearls. In deciding to board the ship, she also effectively causes her own sex change and, to a certain degree, remains complicit with a patriarchal

²⁰ See K. Lawrence for a comparative reading of *Orlando* and *The Voyage Out*.

system. Indeed, one of the reasons why Orlando decides to leave the gypsies is that they show “neither reverence for the Talbots nor respect for a multiplicity of bedrooms” (144). The Talbots here point to a eugenic interest in breeding and thus reference Orlando’s own aristocratic genealogy, which she seeks to preserve. Yet Woolf implies that, as a woman, Orlando cannot fully partake in this patriarchal Englishness: not only does Orlando lose the post of English ambassador the same night she turns into a woman, but she also becomes the victim of a lawsuit upon her return to England that threatens to take away her ancestral home. Sackville-West herself experienced the loss of her ancestral home, Knole, as a traumatic form of exile that resulted specifically from the fact that she was not a male heir. In *Orlando*, Woolf draws on this connection between femininity and displacement, as she implies that Englishness is not open to women in the same way it is to men.²¹ This also implies that, as a woman, Orlando cannot fully return to England. Woolf views this homelessness as a productive experience that allows women to step away from a stable and singular patriarchal ‘Captain Self’. Displaced from a stable home and thus forced to move, women’s journeys are not determined by a patriarchal itinerary.

In *Orlando*, Woolf reinforces this point by showing that the time line of female sexual development does not have to culminate in a mature and stable womanhood. Orlando resists the prescriptive course of the Captain’s journey and delays the establishment of a stable sexual identity by retaining the playful mobility of her Elizabethan ‘boyhood’. Orlando enters into femininity “like a child entering into possession of a pleasaunce or toy cupboard” (149). Rather than ‘arriving’ at a mature femininity, Orlando views femininity as form of masquerade as opposed to a stable identity. In this sense, there is an ironic contrast between the directionality of the Captain’s ship and Orlando’s much less teleological sexual transformation that continues even after the boat has reached the English coast. Early in *Orlando*, the biographer states that “our most daily movements are like the passage of a ship on an unknown sea” with no aim in sight (75). This insight is embedded in the midst of a sentence that covers a whole page and thus underlines the lack of directionality. Since the ship journey represents sexual development, and female sexual

²¹ Woolf would explicitly write about the connection between feminism and exile in *Three Guineas*.

development in particular, Woolf's vision of a journey without aim once again unsettles stable figurations of sexual difference.²²

How do we reconcile this idea of a multiplicity of selves, which is celebrated in *Orlando*, with the fact that its protagonist *does* marry? To be sure, Orlando's marriage to Shelmerdine is delayed until the nineteenth century and the first words Orlando says to Shelmerdine are "I'm dead, sir!" (239). Moreover, Woolf depicts the longing for a husband as unnatural and as a type of neurasthenic disease (Harvey 400). Nevertheless, it is through marriage that Orlando gains the rights to her ancestral home and re-establishes her respectability. Woolf is lovingly restoring Sackville-West's ancestral home, Knole, which she had painfully lost. But Woolf might also be mocking Sackville-West's conservative Englishness and the fact that her escapades in Paris led her back to a bourgeois and aristocratic existence in the safe haven of marriage. This is in keeping with readings of Sackville-West's life like that of Suzanne Raitt, who claims that "the private narratives of her lesbian loves flourished in the protective shade of the public narratives of her marriage" (*Vita* 92). Even though Sackville-West could be strikingly conservative in her depiction of marriage and there is no doubt that she herself juxtaposes the role of the pure wife with the transgressive cross-dressing lesbian in *Portrait of a Marriage*, we see in novels like *Challenge* and *The Dark Island* that she understood marriage as an adventure itself.²³ Sackville-West would problematise normative figurations of female development, sexuality and marriage by drawing on the metaphors of travelling in time and space. In doing so, she not only encoded non-normative sexuality and sexual intermediacy as a form of ongoing adventure, but also redefined marriage itself.

²² In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf draws on a related image in her most famous description of androgyny. The girl and the young man enter a taxicab, which "glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere" (87). The taxi turns into a boat taken away on a stream, but in an unknown direction. The key term here is 'elsewhere', which, for Woolf, does not imply a transcendental androgyny, but an experience of the heterogeneity of the self and of differentiation itself (Jacobus 19-20).

²³ I am less concerned with Sackville-West's real-life gender politics, which were problematic to say the least, and more interested in the way in which she constructs an image of marriage through metaphors of travel. For a discussion of Sackville-West's conservatism, see Doan ("Place").

Sackville-West and the Adventure of Marriage

In her confessional manuscript, which her son Nigel Nicolson would publish as *Portrait of a Marriage* after his mother's death, Sackville-West describes herself in terms of duality: "I advance ... the perfectly accepted theory that cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate" (108).²⁴ Sackville-West came to understand herself as a sexual "type" through her reading of Ellis and, especially, Edward Carpenter and Otto Weininger (*Portrait* 107).²⁵ From Carpenter, she derived the idea that she was morally superior and therefore capable of reconciling the sexes. From her reading of Weininger, she adopted the idea that sexual intermediacy was a periodic phenomenon: sexual intermediacy was not necessarily "a static, morphological phenomenon ... [but] a potentially periodic event" that allowed, for example, for a man to feel 'more manly' in the evening than in the morning (Sengoopta, *Weininger* 48). Sackville-West described and presented herself in terms of processual sexual duality. Her biographer, Victoria Glendinning, describes how Sackville-West would surprise her friends appearing in her "farm-girl's uniform of breeches and gaiters" and then, again, in a dress the next day (93). Associated with this duality were different sexual roles. In *Portrait*, she tends to present herself as pure and passive in her relationship with Nicolson, but as active and adventurous in her relationship with Trefusis.

As we have seen, Sackville-West experienced her masculine and lesbian selves through travelling and, therefore, away from the domestic sphere she shared with Harold Nicolson. In *Portrait*, she describes eloping with Trefusis as "blissful ... I felt like a person translated, or re-born; it was like beginning one's life again in a different capacity" (*Portrait* 109). This sense of re-birth away from home allowed her to cross not just the borders of gender and sexuality, but also race, class and propriety. About her cross-dressing experiences abroad, she writes: "I dressed as a boy. It was easy, because I could put a khaki bandage round my head, which in those days was so common that it attracted no attention at all. I browned my face and

²⁴ See Johnston for a discussion of the relationship between *Challenge* and *Portrait of a Marriage* in terms of life writing (55-71).

²⁵ Sackville-West's engagement with sexological discourse has been discussed by Raitt and Doan ("Sex"; *Sapphism*, 133-135).

hands" (*Portrait* 111). Later on, she describes Julian as a "slouching boy with the bandaged head and the rather *voyou* appearance" (*Portrait* 117). The persona of Julian thus seems to achieve a complete break from Sackville-West's role as Harold Nicolson's wife and as the mother of two young children in England.

In her autobiographical novel *Challenge*, written between May 1918 and November 1919 at the height of her affair with Trefusis, lesbian sexuality is encoded through metaphors of travelling and exoticism. Julian, who is instinctively drawn away from his home in England, appears as the adventurer.²⁶ The plot revolves around an island off the coast of Greece, Aphros, which is struggling for independence from the mainland. Julian takes up the place as the rescuer of the islanders and helps them to lead the rebellion. His uncle reminds him, "You don't belong there, boy; don't you ever forget that. You belong here. You're English" (38). Julian, however, rejects his English heritage and fulfils his more adventurous destiny, implied by his exotic dark looks, which have earned him the nickname "Persian miniature" (17).

Julian's wish to escape the restraints of his English identity represents Sackville-West's desire to leave behind her domestic role as wife and mother. His longing to be at home on the island is not the desire for stability, but for adventure, as the island itself is described as a mobile space: "land that had slipped the leash of continents, forsworn solidarity, cut adrift from security and prudence!" (66). The crisis of Englishness and the exploration of a non-Western space are here, as in *Orlando*, representative of sexual transgression. In Greece, Julian gets involved with the exotic Eve, Trefusis' fictional counterpart. Julian is drawn to Eve, because she "was not part of his life in England, the prosaic life; she was part of his life on the Greek seaboard, unreal and fantastic" (43); "Eve had never been to England, nor could he see any place in England for her" (45). Just as Sackville-West could cross-dress and fulfil her desire for Trefusis by travelling abroad, Julian has to renounce his English origins to be with Eve. In *Challenge*, the boat and the island come to

²⁶ Even though Sackville-West 'cross-dresses' as Julian in *Challenge*, the novel was dedicated to Trefusis in Romania and the encoded lesbian relationship was so obvious to readers that her family asked Sackville-West to withdraw the book from publication. In an embarrassing episode, the English publication of the novel with Collins in 1920 was halted after the book had already been bound. *Challenge* was published in America in 1923, but, according to Glendinning, the lesbian subtext was not discovered (130).

stand in for the experience of sexual transgression achieved through mobility. Indeed, Julian and Eve first become intimate on the boat when they are on the way to Aphros, and they experience a short period of happiness on the island itself.

But Julian soon realises that Eve's alliance does not lie with Aphros, but with the main land that seeks to suppress the island. In the end, Eve, who is jealous of his love for Aphros, betrays him and the island falls back into the hands of the Greek army. Once colonised, the island no longer offers Julian and Eve the freedom they have experienced. Julian explains: "we had to do only with love – love and rebellion! ... Now, instead of love, we must have marriage; and instead of rebellion, law" (273). In the end, Eve sets Julian free and commits suicide by walking into the sea. Reading the book as an encoded lesbian love story, the tragic failure of the relationship between Julian and Eve might imply that the relationship between the two women is thwarted due to social regulations, here represented by the institution of marriage. In this context, it is important to point out that Nigel Nicolson reads Aphros as a representation of Harold, "the rival for Eve's love" (*Portrait* 151). Glendinning takes up this interpretation and describes the novel as a text about "love and duty" where Eve/Violet presents the first and Harold/Aphros the latter (93). It is Sackville-West's dutiful marital love that leads to the downfall of her transgressive relationship with Trefusis. This reading is problematic, as it does not take into account that Aphros is constructed as a space of independence and adventure rather than duty and stability. Indeed, Julian's first duty lies with England and his alliance with Aphros is transgressive in and of itself. Moreover, the relationship between Julian and Eve is not thwarted by a socially enforced marriage, but by Eve's possessiveness.²⁷ If we accept that Aphros comes to represent Nicolson, and Julian's relationship with Aphros stands in for their marriage, we need to question what kind of marriage is described here.

Some answers are given in Sackville-West's second island novel, *The Dark Island*, published by the Hogarth Press in 1934. According to Glendinning, it is "the most mysterious of Vita's novels, because the most private" (273). It is also, in many ways, one of Sackville-West's most open works, as she addresses a range of issues

²⁷ Sackville-West would comment on the possessive nature of lesbian relationships explicitly in her last novel *No Signposts in the Sea* (135-137).

from sadomasochism, to prostitution, abortion and lesbianism in comparatively explicit terms. *The Dark Island* was not well received and Sackville-West would not write another novel for eight years. Woolf recounts in her diary that Leonard Woolf called it “perilous fantastic stuff, a woman flagellated in a cave”, and that the two publishers were asking Sackville-West to reconsider “a joke about the prostate gland” (226).

The response to the novel’s riskiness is indicative of the fact that *The Dark Island* further develops many of the ideas Sackville-West first dealt with in the even more scandalous *Challenge* over a decade earlier. The female protagonist, Shirin, shares many similarities with Julian: she was born in Persia, but left the country when she was five years old. At the age of sixteen, when she is introduced, she is driven by the desire for adventure and independence and rebels against the restrictions imposed on her because of her gender. She envies her brothers’ freedom to travel alone and her mother worries that her daughter might never marry. Like Julian, Shirin is fascinated with an island, Storn, off the coast of Port Breton, where her family spends the holidays every year. Even though she has never visited the island before, Shirin associates it with “invigoration”, a break from the routine of her everyday life (31). Similar to Aphros, Storn is described as “un-English ... rather foreign” and Shirin comments that even the dogs on the islands are “mongrels” and without owners (53). In contrast to Orlando’s Talbots, the mongrels stand for hybridity and a removal from the ties of past genealogies. For Shirin, the island represents “enchanted ground, - really enchanted, where anything, physically, might come along, and where anything, spiritually, might happen within oneself; where one might feel free and act the most incalculable things, though whether good or evil, who could foresee?” (54). This variability is once again expressed in terms of mobility, as the island is described as a boat that “might drift away in the night, to reappear someday among the Cyclades or the Sporades, or, more likely, never reappearing anywhere” (40).

By chance, Shirin meets Venn, the heir of Storn, who convinces her to visit the island with him. On the boat, Shirin experiences *jouissance*, an orgasmic moment in which the certainties of the sexed self are unsettled:

She looked at Venn, liking him now, not hating him, liking him all the more because she held a secret against him, several secrets: her own desire to walk at last on Storn; her own satisfaction at having kept herself away from it for all those years; her firmness in the refusal to go there, even at his invitation, until she was quite sure he would not resent her presence. She liked him, too, for another reason, of which he was also unconscious: for the satisfaction that he gave her by the rhythmical movement of his body, bending to the strong stroke of the oars, backwards and forwards, his muscles swelling under his jersey. Rhythm in any form gave her a sensuous satisfaction always. And the boy was beautiful in a way, beautiful in body though not in face; ... but her satisfaction in him was quite impersonal; she watched him much as she might have watched the action of a young horse; not with any thought of him as a young male; for although she possessed a certain experience of men, even beyond her years, and had acquired a certain superficially competent manner in her dealings with them, who invariably treated her as sheer woman already, not as an independent person irrespective of sex, so that she had to act up and behave in the way expected of her, she yet remained untouched and unaware whenever her defences were not being called into play. They were not being called into play at this moment. This moment, for her, compounded of a dancing sea, a small boat, herself alive in it, a rhythmical creature bending to a pair of oars, and Storn in the distance, Storn which for ten years she had, – and how wisely! – refused. ... Venn was simply the healthy creature, rowing, and taking her to Storn. He was part of the boat and the water, and part also of the tin of bait and the dead silvery fish lying at the bottom of the boat, and he was also the person who was taking her to Storn; but he was not a real person to her, and her thoughts were utterly withdrawn from him. Her thoughts were not thoughts at all, but simply a haze of feeling. (51-52)

The prerequisite to Shirin's sexual satisfaction is not the feeling of intimacy with Venn, but the experience of distance and anonymity. Venn is depersonalised and dehumanised: it is not his face that Shirin desires, but his body, which becomes a horse, and then turns into the boat itself. The rhythm of the boat allows Shirin to feel sexual pleasure, but this experience is only possible, because she ceases to perceive Venn as a man. This also allows her to distance herself from her traditional feminine role, so that she becomes 'an independent person irrespective of sex'. Thus, the liminal space of the boat – suspended between origin and destination – comes to be associated with sexual freedom: on the boat, Shirin can forget that she is a girl on land and, for a moment, become different from herself. The liminality of the boat is emphasised by the temporality of rhythm, which is repetitive rather than teleological

and therefore seems to offer Shirin the sensation that the moment of arrival and the end of adventure are endlessly delayed.

Like Woolf, Sackville-West contrasts the freedom experienced on the boat with the trajectory of its journey. Once Shirin and Venn have arrived on the island, he reveals his sadistic nature when he pushes Shirin to the ground and throws himself at her. Even though Shirin's response is ambiguous at first, she reacts with fear when she feels his erection and realises that "he was a boy and she was a woman" (79). Ten years later, Shirin arrives on the island again, this time as Venn's wife. It is clear that Shirin does not love Venn and only marries him because she desires the freedom that Storn might offer her. Just as Venn had put an end to the pleasurable dissolution of sexual certainties Shirin experiences on the boat, he now tells his wife that Storn is irrevocably his. Venn's sadism culminates in a scene where he flagellates Shirin in a cave on the island. The two moments of arrival mark the end of the desire for independence and mobility.

If the island becomes a place of repression, Sackville-West also continues to construct it as a utopian space of liberation. Venn's sadism is linked to his Norman heritage, as one of his ancestors installed the chains in the cave, where he killed his wife. The association between Venn and the Norman invasion underlines his desire to violently possess Shirin. It also exposes the island as a space with a complex history. When telling Shirin about his ancestor's wife, he states: "God knows what he'd done with her ... History doesn't relate that" (59). Sackville-West implies that a masculine Norman culture has repressed a feminine history that can no longer be told. Like Hall and, as we shall see, Bryher and H.D., Sackville-West here presents an image of the island as a complex and layered historical space. A similar dynamic is at work in the depiction of Aphros, whose indigenous culture is being repressed by a dominant Greece. Seen within a historical framework, Venn's claim of ownership becomes anachronistic as Norman rule itself was overcome. The island emerges as a space with changing owners that can never, properly, belong to any one person: Shirin fails to gain ownership of Storn through marriage just as Julian has to leave behind Aphros after the uprising has failed. The fact that the island necessarily has to be lost points to the fact that it is a dynamic space that problematises the very idea of ownership.

Venn's failed claim of dominance becomes more apparent when the sculptor, Christina, arrives on the island. The depiction of Christina as a lesbian is thinly veiled: Christina "loved Shirin, and would have loved her more, had Shirin ever allowed anyone to come close to her, in the intimacy of love or friendship" (189). After Venn has killed Christina in a staged sailing accident, Shirin realises that "she had allowed Christina finally to replace Storn in her heart and soul. Then Venn had killed Christina too" (290). While Shirin identifies Christina with Storn, Christina also compares Shirin to the island, realising that they are both "absolutely self-contained and apart" (203). Through the mutual identification with Storn, the two women manage to 'share' the island without claiming ownership. After her death, Christina's body is washed up near the cave in which Shirin has been flagellated. Similar to Hall's "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself", the island cave emerges as a complex space. On the one hand, it witnesses the violent reestablishment of sexual difference, here associated with the restrictions of marriage; but on the other hand, it also emerges as a space where dissident desire becomes possible in the first place. It is only through Christina's death that Shirin can acknowledge her feelings for the other woman and take the initiative to kill Venn.

If *The Dark Island* is a novel about marital failure, Sackville-West also articulates her own ideal of marriage through the image of the island. Shirin knows that she and Venn could have been happy because of their shared love for Storn:

How well Venn understands Storn! how well I understand Venn! how well he and I could unite in our understanding of Storn and all that Storn stands for, keeping our personal independence always inviolate, respecting one another's separateness all the time, leaving our understanding implicit, unexpressed!... by what a narrow margin have we, Venn and I, missed the pure perfection offered us! (181; her emphasis)

In what reads like an idealised description of Sackville-West's own marital arrangements, the love of Storn is here equated with the love of autonomy and freedom. If Sackville-West defined marriage as the opposition of ownership, it is, indeed, ironic that Orlando and Shirin marry in order to own the ancestral home or the island respectively. But in shifting the focus from the English home to the exotic island in her fiction, Sackville-West redefines marriage in terms of mobility and adventure.

More specifically, the island, cut free from the ties of ownership, emerges as a dynamic space and, like the boat to which it is repeatedly compared, allows for the shifting nature of the sexual self. If we accept that Sackville-West understood marriage as a form of adventure, we cannot read her decision to return to England after her Parisian escapade as a safe homecoming. This also means that we need to problematise the understanding of Sackville-West's duality according to which she would rehearse a domestic femininity with Nicolson, and experience an adventurous masculinity with her female lovers. The boy persona of Julian, for instance, must not only be read as a figure of lesbian desire, but also of male homoeroticism that appeals to Nicolson. Martha Vicinus describes the boy with his indeterminate sexuality as a "handsome liminal creature [that] could absorb and reflect a variety of sexual desires and emotional needs" ("Boy", 83). Julian allows Sackville-West to "satisfy both sides of the triangle of her passionate erotic life" with Trefusis, but also with her husband and thus *inside* of marriage (Johnston 70). The fact that Nicolson acknowledged his wife's masculinity and viewed it as part of their marriage becomes apparent in his comment on a portrait of Vita painted by William Strang at the time of her affair with Trefusis: "It is so *absolutely* my little Mar. She's all there – her little straight body, her boyhood of Raleigh manner ..." (quoted in Glendinning 93; his emphasis). The potentially possessive gesture of calling Sackville-West 'his little Mar' is countered by the definition of Sackville-West's boyhood in terms of adventure, emphasised through the reference to Elizabethan discoverer Walter Raleigh. As in Sackville-West's fiction, adventure here comes to stand for sexual mobility. In keeping with Weininger's processual understanding of sexual intermediacy, Nicolson and Sackville-West redefine marriage as a pairing of inherently mixed-sex selves and thus as a relationship that could accommodate Sackville-West's sexual fluidity.

Woolf depicts the dynamics of Sackville-West's marital arrangements when Orlando and Shelmerdine recognise each other's sexual duality: "'You're a woman, Shell!', she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!', he cried" (240). Orlando calls Shelmerdine "Mar", which is, as we have seen, the pet name Nicolson would use for Sackville-West (245). The androgynous nickname allows for gender and sexual roles to become interchangeable. Woolf draws on the trope of travelling to emphasise the

freedom of Orlando's marriage: not only is Shelmerdine a seafarer and therefore mostly absent, but when he tells Orlando a long-winded story about his adventures abroad, Orlando understands the encoded meaning when she replies: "Yes, negresses are seductive, aren't they?" (246). Racial otherness here stands for non-domestic, non-marital and also non-heterosexual affairs, which Orlando and Shelmerdine embrace and also eroticise as part of their own marriage. Woolf's hyperbolic depiction of Sackville-West's marital dynamics draws attention to the fact that her redefinition of marriage is, at least partly, an idealised construction. However, the rhetoric Woolf uses to describe this marriage is the same language Sackville-West employed when she figured marriage as a form of adventure that, similar to the space of the island or the boat, allowed for the expression of her own sexual duality.

Bryher and H.D.: Rewriting the Past

Like Sackville-West, Bryher draws on the persona of the adventurous boy to articulate same-sex desire and cross-gender identification, but she also associates the figure with the very process of individual development itself. Bryher derived the affirmation of her 'boyhood' through her engagement with sexological literature and the direct exchange with sexologists like Ellis.²⁸ In a letter to H.D., written shortly after her first meeting with Ellis, she describes how the sexologist helped her to make sense of her feelings:

Then we got on to the question of whether I was a boy sort of escaped into the wrong body and he says it is a disputed subject but quite possible and showed me a book about it ... we agreed it was most unfair for it to happen but apparently I am quite justified in pleading I ought to be a boy ... I am just a girl by accident. (quoted in Friedman, *Signets* 217)

Bryher's identification with the complex figure of the boy carries different meanings. Even though she drew on the model of inversion and saw herself as a boy born in the wrong body, her engagement with sexological discourse is highly idiosyncratic. In contrast to Hall, Bryher does not mention sexological terminology explicitly in her autobiographical novels. Contemporary reviews show that her first autobiographical

²⁸ Bryher's indebtedness to sexological discourse has been acknowledged by several critics. See Doan (*Sapphic*, especially 146-149); Winning ("Introduction" xxiii-xxxvii); Collecott (*H.D.*, 186-189); Friedman and Duplessis (217).

novel, *Development*, was not explicitly read as a text about sexual inversion even though several reviewers noted the ‘strangeness’ of Nancy’s desire to be a boy (Doan, *Sapphism* 148). There are many reasons why Bryher would not have made more explicit use of sexology in her autobiographical novels: in contrast to Hall, she was not interested in carving out a public identity for female inverts, and she was also much more secretive about her own lesbianism which is, for instance, not openly acknowledged in her later autobiographies. But the absence of sexological terminology is also indicative of the fact that Bryher did not unequivocally embrace the idea of congenital inversion and inborn masculinity. Early in *Development*, for instance, Bryher makes it clear that her identification with the figure of the boy is not based on essentialism: “Her one regret was that she was a girl. Never having played with any boys, she imagined them wonderful creatures, welded of her favourite heroes and her own fancy, ever seeking adventures” (24). Like Sackville-West, Bryher was disadvantaged as a female heir, as the bulk of her father’s fortune went to her estranged and reclusive brother John Ellerman Jr.²⁹ Even though Bryher did not express bitterness at the discrepancy between her and John’s inheritance, it would nevertheless have made her even more aware of the material inequalities resulting from the fact that she was a woman. It is the painful experience of the limitations placed upon women that would contribute to her identification with the boy. For Bryher, the boy is not primarily the expression of an intrinsically felt masculinity, but it also represents the “frustrated desire for action” (Vicinus, “Boy” 83). The boy is a product of the imagination, a screen onto which Nancy projects the experiences she is missing because she is a girl. This insight is important, as it helps to problematise the idea that Bryher came to embrace a sexological and congenital model of inversion whereas H.D. was drawn to allegedly more complex psychoanalytic constructions of female sexuality, as Friedman and Duplessis have proposed (217). Not only does this approach simplify Bryher’s understanding of sexology, as we have seen, but it also glosses over her own engagement with psychoanalysis.

²⁹ According to Carroll, John Jr. inherited £18m, which roughly equates to £4 billion in today’s terms. Bryher, on the other hand, inherited £900,000, which was nevertheless a huge fortune given that there were only ten female millionaires registered in the entire world at the time (n. pag.).

Bryher was introduced to Freud's writings through Ellis. While she reacted suspiciously at first, she soon became one of the first subscribers of the *British Journal of Psychoanalysis* and it was Ellis who arranged for the first meeting between the two in 1927. In the early 1930s, Bryher had several sessions of psychotherapy with Hans Sachs in Berlin and even considered training as a psychoanalyst herself (Marcus, *Muse* 401-402). Bryher described Freud as "vertical and deep", appreciating the emphasis Freudian psychoanalysis placed on individual developmental history (*Artemis* 302). Freud continuously drew on archaeological metaphors to describe the work of the analyst, who had to access strata of consciousness that lay in the past and had been repressed. Bryher and H.D. took an interest in the ideal of travelling through time and exploring historical depth in order to uncover an as yet unwritten history. However, as we shall see, their engagement with psychoanalytic discourse and the question of temporal mobility also differed significantly.

H.D. went into analysis with Freud in Vienna in the early 1930s. In her account of the analysis, *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. explains that one of the reasons why she consulted Freud was that she wanted to deal with her occult visions (39). In a letter to Ellis written in 1933, she explained: "I wobble dangerously on that very-fine line between science and occultism, and there Freud will help me" (H.D. et al. 18). H.D. is here referring to her visionary experiences, which begun after her traumatic experience of the Great War. This was also the time during which she started to get involved with Bryher and it was on their travels to the Scilly Islands in 1919 that H.D. had her 'bell jar' vision, a moment of birth and rebirth. The next year, during her trip to Corfu with Ellis and Bryher, H.D. experienced the infamous 'writing on the wall' incident, in which she saw mystic signs projected onto the hotel wall. H.D. interpreted these experiences as a sign of her psychic duality, which allowed her to transcend the present and tap into the historical past. In *Tribute to Freud*, the psychoanalyst emerges as the guide on her "journeys" through time (*Freud* 9). Freud would rebuke H.D. for looking at her wristwatch, encouraging her to overcome chronological time and allowing past and future to corrupt the present moment (*Freud* 17). During her sessions with Freud, H.D. states, "[t]he years went forward,

then backward. ... It was not that he [Freud] conjured up the past and invoked the future. It was a present that was in the past or a past that was in the future” (*Freud* 9).

H.D. tended to think about temporal mobility in spatial terms. In doing so, she was influenced by Einstein, who maintained that time and space did not exist as separate absolutes, but were closely intertwined and constructed through the mind (Friedman, *Penelope's* 234-235). For H.D., this implied that an exploration of time and space was synonymous with an investigation of the individual consciousness. Not only did she experience her visions while physically travelling through Greece and Egypt, but even during her sessions with Freud, she describes how her journeys in time would be triggered “by his priceless collection of Greek, Egyptian, and Chinese treasures” (*Freud* 116). Freud would show the artefacts he had gathered in his study to his patients, hoping that the traces of the past they contained would trigger repressed memories in the analysand. For H.D., the fact that the items represented exotic places was as important as their age, as she was interested in cultures that were temporally and spatially distant and could therefore reveal otherwise obscure aspects of her own consciousness.

H.D.’s turn to historical fiction in the 1920s is the outcome of this desire to explore the self through the discovery of a spatially and temporally remote ancient world. In using historical fiction as a form of autobiography, H.D. focused attention on the split between the self in the present and the self in the past. This sense of a temporally split self was aligned with H.D.’s perception of her own sexual duality, the “two loves separate” she describes in her poem about Freud, “The Master” (line 2.33). In her poetry and prose, H.D. often presents the doubling of the ‘I’ or draws on twin characters that are alternately gendered to emphasise this split self. Shari Benstock, for instance, argues that H.D.’s poem, “Hermes of the Ways”, contains a “double vision” signalled by two ‘Is’, one belonging to a masculine Hermes the other to a feminised Hermes (324-325). In her Hellenic novel *Hedylus*, set on the island of Samos, H.D. splits herself into Hedyle, the mother, and Hedylus, the son.³⁰ Friedman speculates that H.D.’s turn to historical fiction was motivated by a desire to emphasise the complications that arise out of the search for the self in the distant past (*Penelope's* 233). However, H.D. also assumed that she had the gift of reconciling

³⁰ See Friedman for discussion of doubling and split self in *Hedylus* (*Penelope's* 253-259).

past and present or, in other words, bringing the past back into the present due to her prophetic gift. She believed in the immortality of the soul and the connection between past lives, which is where she disagreed with Freud. In a letter to Bryher she explains how her views diverged from those of Freud: “I am not, as you know, a sloppy theosophist or horoscope-ist [sic], but you know, I do believe in these things and I think there is a whole other-science of them. And that is where, in a way, S.F. [Sigmund Freud] and I part company” (H.D. et al. 331).

Despite the fact that Freud would not affirm H.D.’s mysticism, she perceived psychoanalysis to be healing not least because it allowed her to positively re-evaluate her bisexuality. Freud offered her a vision of reconciliation when he identified H.D.’s desire for women as the desire for the primordial phallic mother that is both male and female. H.D. reported to Bryher that Freud had explained to her that she was “stuck at the earliest pre-OE [oedipal] stage, and ‘back to the womb’ seems to be my only solution. Hence islands, sea, Greek primitives and so on” (H.D. et al. 132). He thus belatedly authorised H.D.’s Hellenism of the 1920s.³¹ For H.D., the island emerged as a repressed maternal space that held out the promise of a reconciliation of her masculine and feminine, as well as her heterosexual and lesbian, selves. To reach back into this past and to actualise it in the present became a means of negotiating her split selves in a productive manner. To articulate this desire for a reconciliation of past and present, a leap out of the temporal constraints of the present, H.D. drew on a rhetoric of androgyny that develops out of the discourses I described in chapter one. The androgynous statue of Swinburne’s “Hermaphroditus”, for instance, was read by H.D. not as a figure of sterility and erotic frustration, but as the epitome of perfect wholeness (Collecott, *H.D.* 52). She was also influenced by Balzac’s *Seraphita*, a copy of which had been given to her by Ezra Pound. In *End to Torment*, she describes the “fiery moment” Seraphita/Seraphitus experiences when s/he transcends the material and temporal world at the end of the novel (11). In a telling misreading, H.D. adds that Seraphita/Seraphitus “disappears or dies in the snow” (11), which implies the volatility of her transcendental vision, the fact that the reconciliation of the dual self is always prone to failure. This shows that H.D. vacillated between a hopeful belief in the reconciliation offered by the maternal

³¹ H.D.’s Hellenism has been widely discussed. See, for instance, Gregory; Collecott (*H.D.* 103-134).

androgynous and the realisation that this wholeness could no longer be achieved in the present.

Like H.D., Bryher was interested in the exploration of unknown and unwritten histories. This interest is most evident in the series of historical novels Bryher began to write in the late 1930s. In *Gateway to the Sea*, for example, Bryher repeats H.D.'s interest in the matriarchal island and traces how female language and experience is erased in the course of history.³² Bryher and H.D. also share an interest in the question of former lives and metempsychosis. Bryher discussed the possibility of 'race memory' with Ellis, who told her that "'it is possible that some experiences are common to the race ... and that the more sensitive inherit a knowledge of emotional states that they have not felt themselves'" (*Artemis* 229). Bryher sensed that race memory might explain why some people felt alienated from the present and really belonged to a previous age. At the same time, she feared that the idea of an inborn memory might rule out the individual's imagination. We are reminded of Bryher's resistance of congenital explanations of inversion that viewed women's desire to be or act as a man as purely biological. Indeed, the idea that she might have been a boy in a former life could certainly have provided 'evidence' for what Bryher perceived as her 'accidental' girlhood. However, Bryher did not seek to ground her desire to be a boy or to travel into the past by presenting them as congenital truths. Rather, she wished to view both the desire to be a boy and time travels as imaginative processes that formed a constitutive part of individual development. In her model of development, the girl's wish to be a boy is conflated with the desire to explore the past and to thus step away from a restrictive female role.

In *Development*, Nancy spends her childhood travelling physically in space, visiting Africa, the Near East and the south of Europe with her family. At the same time, she travels widely in time. Indeed, Bryher presents childhood as a period in which past and present co-exist in complex ways allowing Nancy to "swing at will from a confused mediaevalism to the clearer beauty of an earlier but not so primitive age" (65). The first story Nancy ever writes reflects her interest in history. It deals with a Carthaginian boy on the verge of his first military campaign. Nancy has learned from her readings that "[a] boy must occupy the centre of the story" as

³² See Hoberman for discussion of *Gateway to the Sea* and Bryher's engagement with the genre of historical fiction.

“Carthaginian girls existed merely in a fabulous way” (38). Following the phallogentric logic of patriarchal historiography, Nancy blames the “cupidity of an effeminate Carthage” for the failure of Hannibal’s heroic journey over the Alps, just as she blames her own ‘accidental’ girlhood for restricting her freedom. Thinking she has finished writing her story, Nancy goes to bed, but she is unable to fall asleep, realising that she has “forgotten to mention the city in her story” (39). She gets up and adds the line, “Carthage was a great city” (39). Nancy has revised her understanding of Carthage, which is now described in positive terms. In mentioning the city, which – like the feminised Greece – had been conquered by a masculinised Rome, explicitly and in positive terms, Nancy effectively rewrites history by introducing a neglected feminine element. Nancy does not know that “a book could be written otherwise than straight from beginning to end” (39). However, in making the final change to the story, Nancy does break through the restrictions of patriarchal historiography by showing that history is not written in a singular line, ‘straight from beginning to end’, but includes as yet unwritten layers that need to be uncovered.

If Nancy’s story exposes a repressed feminine element, it still centres on the figure of the boy. The fact that Bryher chooses to explore the restrictions of femininity through an identification with the boy appears paradoxical at first. Contemporary reviewers like Marianne Moore rebuked Bryher for failing to realise that the modern world already offered women more liberty than men. In her review in *The Dial*, Moore writes:

One might easily expect to find conclusions arrived at by the small heroine, immature; and possibly in her protest against woman’s *rôle* as a wearer of skirts – in her envying a boy his freedom and his clothes – her view is somewhat curtailed. One’s dress is more a matter of one’s choice than appears; if there be any advantage, it is on the side of woman; woman is more nearly at liberty to assume man’s dress than man to avail himself of the opportunities of self expression afforded by the variations in colour and fabric which a woman may use. Moreover, women are no longer debarred from professions that are open to men, and if one cares to be femininely lazy, traditions of the past still afford shelter. (509)

Moore’s insistence on the greater freedom afforded women in modern society resonates with Woolf’s positive evaluation of women’s displacement and mobility. In the context of a cultural moment in which women writers were beginning to affirm the productive and subversive potential of writing *as women*, Bryher’s

insistence on Nancy's desire to be a boy does seem anachronistic or 'immature', as Moore says. Moore explicitly mentions Nancy's objection to being a 'wearer of skirts'. She is referring to a passage in *Development* where Nancy rebels against wearing her school uniform. For Nancy, school life is catastrophic, because she is reminded of the restrictions that result from being a girl. She feels that her "wet draggling skirt made impediment at each step", which reinforces the association between femininity and immobility (138). The same feeling is expressed at the beginning of *Two Selves*, where Nancy thinks of herself as "[t]wo selves. Jammed against each other, disjointed and ill-fitting. An obedient Nancy with heavy plaits ... A boy, a brain, that planned adventures and sought wisdom" (183). In both quotations, femininity is described in terms of ballast that holds Nancy back and impedes mobility. Bryher implies that it is because of the restrictions Nancy experiences that she adopts the persona of the boy in the first place. Moreover, as we have seen, putting a boy at the centre of the story enables Nancy to uncover an alternative feminine history and thus to work against the restrictions imposed on girls like her. However, Bryher never strips off the mask of the boy, as Woolf does in *Orlando*, to reveal that the mobility Nancy experiences is 'really' that of a woman. Quite the contrary, as we can see in the quotation from *Two Selves*, Bryher continues to draw on the model of gender inversion to motivate Nancy's desire to step away from a restrictive female role.

If the desire to be a boy is associated with the desire to overcome the restrictions of the present, it is not surprising that Bryher would forge a connection between gender inversion and temporal mobility. This link is reinforced at the end of *Development*, when Nancy discovers her artistic talents in the form of colour hearing and the 'visual imagination'.³³ Bryher uses the term 'visual imagination' to describe the ability to create a vision of the past, project it onto reality and materialise it in the present. For Nancy, this vision takes the shape of the Scilly Islands, which are constructed as a fantastic space made real through Nancy's imagination: they are not

³³ As Doan points out, Ellis had compared inversion to colour hearing in a bid to naturalise dissident sexuality. Bryher views colour hearing and the visual imagination as special talents and thus draws on the idea of the superior invert, derived from a conscious misreading of Carpenter, who reserves a heightened sensibility for the *male* homosexual (*Sapphism* 149). Bryher's 'visual imagination' further supports the notion of the superiority of the female invert. However, there is also a sense that this superiority is *not* inborn, but a result of the social restrictions placed on inverted women, which they can only overcome by turning to and developing their imaginative abilities.

“known in actual life, but the shape is too vivid ever to be forgotten” (174). Actualising a forgotten past serves to liberate the self from the restrictions of the present. It is only logical that Nancy experiences a short moment of certainty on the Scillies, in which she “know[s] she was a boy” (152). Bryher, of course, named herself after one of the islands in a bid to claim independence and to reinvent herself as an artist. The androgynous pseudonym underlines Bryher’s belief that she could not live, desire and write freely while staying within what she perceived as the limited parameters of femininity. Yet the island is not constructed as a space where femininity is overcome in favour of masculinity: Nancy identifies herself and the islands with the feminised Carthage, when she writes that “the hordes ... could not plunder her of Carthage, could not blur the islands from her mind” (177). The islands are, at the same time, a place of feminine liberation *and* masculine affirmation.

Bryher seeks to maintain rather than reconcile this tension between the masculine and feminine self. For her, the island is not constructed as a matriarchal space of potential wholeness, but rather as a space where a productive tension of sexual duality is maintained. In contrast to H.D., Bryher saw the attempt to reach into the past in terms of an ongoing journey, a form of development, rather than an instantaneous moment of vision and reconciliation. If H.D. turned to psychoanalysis in a bid to facilitate this moment of resolution, Laura Marcus argues that Bryher viewed psychoanalysis as a means of facilitating development by “liberating individuals and cultures from habit and tradition and educating them for a modern world” (*Muse* 327).³⁴ It was the same emphasis on development that ultimately contributed to the fact that Bryher could not unreservedly embrace Freud. As Franco Moretti points out, Freudian psychoanalysis is opposed to any kind of *Bildung*, as it does not *form*, but finds meaning in “*breaking up* the psyche into its opposing ‘forces’” (10, his emphasis). H.D. could identify with the ‘broken self’ of psychoanalysis and dreamed of finding a time or space where the multiple selves could be reconciled. Bryher, on the other hand, was less interested in the discovery

³⁴ Bryher had strong feelings regarding childhood education. She believed, for instance, that the schooling system restricted the development of children and girls in particular. The negative description of Nancy’s experiences at school in *Development* started a public debate about the treatment of children in British schools (Winning, “Introduction” xxi-xxii). Bryher was here drawing on her own traumatic experiences in Queenwood, a school she entered at the age of fourteen (*Artemis* 139-157).

of androgynous wholeness or a matriarchal home, because she associated it with stability and stasis. In *Development*, she explicitly states that the “tranquillity” of Greece “made her eyes afraid” (127). In *Heart of Artemis*, she further explains: “Perhaps I was born with a longing for adventure instead of a heart? I have never wanted to remain anywhere permanently, no matter how beautiful the landscape” (9). In contrast to H.D.’s Hellenism, Bryher felt a greater affinity with the dynamism of the Renaissance, a period of adventure, discovery and rebirth, but also severe oppression of women.³⁵ In her essay, “The Girl-Page in Elizabethan Literature”, Bryher comments on “the spirit of adventure so essential an element of time” and juxtaposes it with the restrictions imposed on girls who desire to participate in these adventures (442). Girls, she implies, had to construct “a new reality that itself was built of dream” to break free from these restraints (445). The theatricality of the age facilitates this dream of adventure and transformation, as the girl can, as Bryher implies, adopt the persona of the boy as so many female characters do in Elizabethan plays. Bryher herself proudly stated, “I am an Elizabethan ... I suspect that like them, I want only ‘to-morrow’” (“Letter to Norman H. Pearson” 206). Bryher’s love of the Renaissance shows that instead of the search for a maternal home, she thrives on an ongoing sense of adventure articulated through the liminal figure of the boy always on the threshold of another new journey and a new tomorrow.

Adventure as Development

As we have seen, Moore took issue with Nancy’s failure to reconcile the dream of freedom with her femininity. If Bryher, like Nancy, feels that she cannot be content as a woman, we need to question what the figure of the boy offered her in the attempt to articulate herself. Throughout *Development* and *Two Selves*, the desire to be a boy is synonymous with the desire to sail. Early on in *Development*, for example, we learn that Nancy “longed to be a boy and go to sea” (24). On the one hand, the

³⁵ For a discussion of H.D. and Bryher’s joint interest in the Renaissance, see Collecott (*H.D.* 221-257). Collecott comments specifically on Bryher’s Renaissance novel, *The Player’s Boy* (241-243). Woolf shared the fascination with the Renaissance and it is no coincidence that Orlando is an Elizabethan boy when we first meet him. Sackville-West was also fascinated with the Elizabethan boy. As we have seen, H. Nicolson compared her to Raleigh and, indeed, the persona of Julian is modelled on that of the Elizabethan adventurer.

connection between the desire to be a boy and the wish to go on a sea adventure is that both experiences are foreclosed to Nancy. She cannot become a boy and she can only travel with her family and, thus, in her role as daughter. But for Bryher, the failure of wish fulfilment is productive rather than stunting. It is because Nancy cannot be a boy or travel around the world that she is motivated to distance herself from a restrictive present and go on imaginative journeys through time that allow her to explore alternative meanings of the self. The boat journey that cannot take place in reality now occurs on the level of the imagination, where it forms a constitutive part of Bryher's concept of individual development. One of the key aspects of the boat journey that Bryher adopts in her model of development is the slow pace of movement, which is contrasted with the speed of modernity. In *Two Selves*, we learn that Nancy considers driving an ambulance car, but fails her driving lessons. She explains: "I'm no good at steering. ... I'm afraid of traffic even on foot and in a car ... I saw what was going to happen so far ahead that when it happened I forgot what thing to plough. I almost smashed up one van and two cycles" (246). Here, the rapid acceleration of modern and urban life in which past, present and future collapse into a pure present stands in conflict with Nancy's imaginative abilities. Amy Lowell, who wrote the preface to *Development*, commented on the unhurried quality of Bryher's narrative, in which the character of Nancy is built "slowly, very slowly" (7). In contrast to the speed of modernity, the boat offers an expansive experience of time that allows for Nancy's journeys through time to form her character. To further stretch the journey of development, Bryher delays Nancy's maturation. Nancy maintains "the fancies of childhood" and, at the age of fifteen, still has the "feelings ... of a child of seven, truant with imagination, unmingled with reality" (79). This desire to prolong the period of childhood in a bid to allow for greater imaginative freedom has recently been described by Kathryn Bond Stockton in her study of the queer child. She describes the queer child's "fascinating asynchronicities", which can be explored as soon as we "prick (deflate, or just delay) the vertical, forward-motion metaphor of growing up ... by exploring the many kinds of sideways growth" (11). Using Stockton's terminology, we can say that Nancy does, indeed, 'grow sideways', as the queer turn away from the developmental path of girlhood allows her to move asynchronously through time.

However, importantly, Bryher does not infinitely delay Nancy's maturity. Quite the contrary, she suggests that 'sideways growth', the imaginative excursions of childhood across time and space, constitute the very trajectory of 'forward growth' or development. Adventure time and maturational time are, for Bryher, one and the same, and both are captured by the slow but steady progress of the boat. Nancy's development comprises three distinct phases: she first learns to shift her interest from fairy tales and romances to "accredited history" (67). This makes her realise the open-endedness of the past and, as in the case of her story about the Carthaginian boy, raises awareness of the elisions of history. The next step involves turning from history to art, which enables her to rewrite history, as she does in the final alteration to her first story. The turn to art also means that Nancy develops an increased interest in the present and the future: "She wished to live in the past no longer. Before a week had gone she decided she would be a great artist" (73). Nancy's explorations of the past are not overcome, but rather present the "training" she needs for "her feelings [to] beat their wings towards the future" (136). Associated with this shift is the increased conflation of the desire to be a boy and the desire to be an artist: "She could never be a sailor, she could never be a boy, but she could be an artist, she could be a writer" (78). It is only after Nancy has renounced her desire to be a boy that she can fulfil her development as an artist and construct the island as an imaginative space. If she experiences a moment of certainty in which she 'is' a boy here, this does not imply that she has come to the end of her journey. Even though Nancy finds "her own South" on the Scilly islands at the end of *Development*, the novel resists any kind of closure (177). Nancy soon feels that her newfound sense of boyhood vanes and she is now once again "desolate with boyishness that might never be put to sea" (154). She now believes that "the islands were too small for her" and longs for "a new world that is the impulse of all discovery" (155). This anticipatory ending is emphasised through the postscript, announcing the next novel, *Two Selves*, which at the time was still introduced under its working title, *Adventure*. If the novel does, as Joanne Winning asserts, take the form of the "pilgrimage to identity", it is clear that this identity is never clearly established ("Introduction", xxv). Quite the contrary, it is the ongoing sense of adventure that comes to define Nancy's sexual and artistic self.

The figure of the boy itself is instrumental in this context, as it underlines the instability of the self and points towards an ongoing process of development that is always incomplete. As we have seen, Moore calls Nancy's desire to be a boy 'immature'. This resonates with Freud's description of Bryher as "ONLY boy", which H.D. cheerfully reported to Bryher (H.D. et al. 112; her emphasis). We are also reminded of Ellis' comments regarding his wife, Edith, whom he describes as "not really man at all in any degree, but always woman, boy, and child" (*Life* 263). Freud and Ellis both conflate the lesbian with the boy or child to emphasise her arrested development. Bryher was eager to embrace this explanatory model. As we have seen, she viewed her own femininity as an accident, implying that somewhere along the lines, development had not been completed successfully. During her analysis with Sachs, Bryher also adopted the psychoanalytic concept of lesbian development according to which the lesbian 'decides' to cross genders at some point of her development. Rather than insist on an intrinsically felt masculinity, Bryher embraced the idea that she had 'chosen' to be a boy at the age of three and had therefore not completed female development (Winning, "Introduction" xxxiii). Viewing her boyishness not only as an unfortunate developmental accident, but also as choice, allowed Bryher to generate a more productive meaning out of the fact that the boy is 'unfinished'. She translated this 'failure' of sexual development into a dynamic model of individual development based on an imaginative engagement with the past and present.

The figure of the boy also took on an important erotic function. As we have seen, Nancy sublimates her desire to *be* a boy and translates it into the desire to *write*. This does not mean, however, that Nancy overcomes her cross-gender desire as writing continues to be described in terms of gender inversion. Moreover, in *Two Selves*, writing is eroticised as the search for a reader comes to encode lesbian desire. Bryher had met H.D. between finishing *Development* and publishing *Two Selves*. The meeting with H.D. finds its way into *Two Selves*, which culminates in Nancy's first encounter with a female artist on the Scilly islands. In her reading of the novel, Diana Collecott rightly shows that Bryher resists the trajectory of female development, as Nancy's journey does not end in marriage or death. Collecott then, counter intuitively, seeks to provide an ending for the text by pointing to Bryher's

unpublished prose-poem, “Eros of the Sea”, which ends with a kiss between a woman and the male God Eros. Because the poem is dedicated to H.D. and takes place in a Cornish sea setting, Collecott reads the kiss as the lesbian signature that is missing from *Two Selves* and presents it as “the space that lies ‘beyond the ending’” of novel (“Romance” 139). Collecott’s reading views Bryher’s ‘failure’ to tie up the narrative in a lesbian kiss as an expression of her fear of censorship. The fact that the female artist Nancy meets remains strangely anonymous supports this approach. It might very well be the case that Bryher did try to avoid censorship, but this reading overlooks the act that the resistance to finality underwrites Bryher’s very concept of development and, also, her aesthetic project. It also fails to acknowledge that irresolution can be an important part of an erotics that thrives on sexual intermediacy. The boy leaves room for a variety of sexual identifications. In her fiction, H.D. would present Bryher in a multiplicity of variously gendered roles as maternal and financial caretaker, co-parent, but also child, muse and lover (Friedman, *Penelope’s* 255-256). While this does not necessarily tell us much about the actual relationship between the two women, it shows that, at least in their fiction, they engaged in an elaborate play with different roles that eroticises the instability of the sexual self.

Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis close down the erotic space that is opened up here when they view the alleged affirmation of Bryher’s lesbian identity at the end of *Two Selves* as a “recompense for her fate” of being a boy in a girls’ body (217). Privileging lesbian identity over cross-gender identification, this reading misses the point that for Bryher, the desire to be a boy and the desire to be with a woman are inseparable.³⁶ The very title of the novel warns us against this one-sided approach, as it simultaneously refers to Nancy’s desire to be a boy, and to her longing for a lover. These different selves are metonymically related as the desire to be a boy comes to stand for the desire to be a writer, which signals the longing for a reader, who is also a lover. However, there is no indication that

³⁶ From what we know, Bryher’s own gender and sexual identity is difficult to place. Winning points out that Bryher collected snippets of magazines dealing with stories of sex changes and concludes that Bryher “conflates some kind of transsexuality with lesbian sexuality, seeing the two perhaps as a seamless continuum” (“Introduction”, xxxiv). My reading of *Development* and *Two Selves* is consistent with this interpretation, but places greater emphasis on the way in which the *impossibility* of a sex change comes to be translated into imaginative mobility.

Nancy renounces her desire to be a boy after she has met the poet. The implied lesbian fulfilment does not 'recompense' for Nancy's desire to be a boy. Indeed, in *West*, the third novel in the series, Nancy goes on one of her 'boy adventures', this time to America. The female poet is travelling with her, but she does not play a significant part in the novel. Bryher refuses to close the gap between the multiple selves insinuated in the title: Nancy does become a writer and she meets her counterpart, the female poet, but their relationship is not 'confirmed' in a kiss nor is Nancy's boyhood ever fully achieved. On yet another level, Nancy's emerging artistic confidence and search for a reader and lover runs parallel to Bryher's development as an artist reflected in the writing of *Development* and *Two Selves*, and the ensuing encounter with H.D. Even though the identity of Nancy and Bryher is implied, Bryher does not solve the split between herself and her alter ego by writing in the first person. The insistence on this play with masks can be read as an elaborate ploy to make unrecognisable the lesbian content of the story. But, we also need to acknowledge that Bryher's very understanding of development as adventure necessitates that the self can never be at home within itself.

As we have seen, Woolf, Sackville-West and Bryher all draw on metaphors of adventure and travel to articulate forms of development and selfhood that deviate from the trajectory of female and heteronormative development. Woolf presents femininity as an ongoing adventure that resists the demands of a singular 'Captain self'. Sackville-West redefines marriage to accommodate for sexual intermediacy. For her, marriage is not only a point of arrival, but yet another adventure that allows for dually sexed selves to express themselves. Bryher, on the other hand, refigures gender inversion so that the girl's desire to be a boy is not a sign of lack or arrestment, but the beginning of an imaginative adventure that facilitates individual development. In different ways, all three writers show that sexual intermediacy, the opening up of binary norms of gender and sexuality, is achieved processually, not only by movement through space, but also time.

Coda

After Sexual Intermediacy?

The knowledge of the mechanism which distributes in the right way those things which are responsible for the ultimate differentiation of male and female sex might be compared with information about the system of tracks and switches within a railroad station, which direct the trains into different directions. But this knowledge does not furnish any information about the material, the destiny, the loads, or the moving power of the trains. (Goldschmidt 436)

In 1917, Richard Goldschmidt published an article entitled “Intersexuality and the Endocrine Aspect of Sex” in the inaugural issue of the journal *Endocrinology*. In a footnote, Goldschmidt explains that he chose the term ‘intersexuality’ rather than ‘sex-intergrades’ because the former can be used in all scientific languages whereas the latter needs to be translated, for instance, into *Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* in German (n.437).¹ Presenting ‘intersexuality’ as an international alternative to Hirschfeld’s terminology, Goldschmidt presents his work as a continuation of sexological discourse. However, Goldschmidt’s work also signalled a new age in which sexual intermediacy along with the temporal issues I have been raising in this thesis were allegedly overcome.

In 1917, genetics had provided a firm basis for sexual difference, and the study of internal secretions had produced some knowledge regarding the different factors involved in the process of sexual differentiation. Despite this new understanding of sex, Goldschmidt maintains that sexual development is radically uncertain. Drawing on the metaphor of rail travel, he states that we do not know which detours and delays might occur and where the journey will ultimately lead. My thesis as a whole has examined how the uncertainties that arise from this unstable relationship between the sexual and the temporal affected late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and culture. One of my main arguments was that a focus on temporality allows us to do justice to the complex and multifaceted way in which sexual intermediacy was understood in this context. I also sought to

¹ American author Xavier Mayne (Edward Irenaeus Prime Stevenson) had published a book entitled *The Intersexes* in 1909, where the term is used as a synonym for sexual inversion (Doan, *Sapphism* 135). Goldschmidt used ‘intersex’ in a very specific sense to write about animal experimentation and gene action, but the term was nevertheless broadly used as a synonym for what was previously known as hermaphroditism (Klöppel n.172).

show that sexual intermediacy allows us to think critically about the governmental and enabling function of time.

With Goldschmidt, we witness the beginning of a paradigm shift that would lead away not only from the model of sexual intermediacy I have been using, but also from some of the recurrent temporal concerns I have discussed in my chapters. Goldschmidt's work sought to combine two emerging disciplines: genetics and endocrinology. Sex chromosomes were discovered in the early 1900s and offered a singular and stable origin of sex. On a chromosomal level, each individual was either male or female. Goldschmidt, however, realised that the phenotype of organisms, their appearance, could differ from their genotype, their chromosomal constitution, and turned to endocrinology in order to explain how sex developed over time (Dietrich 69). On the one hand, the focus on the as yet little understood internal secretions continued to emphasise the instability of sexual development even in the face of genetic truths. On the other hand, endocrinology was, from the start, concerned with the regulation of the human body. In the introduction to the first issue of *Endocrinology*, C.E. Sajous writes that the discipline promises "a new conception of Medicine – a Medicine befitting our dignity, our longing for logical reasoning and rationalism precisely where uncertainty and empiricism now reign supreme" (5). While endocrinology could not erase the uncertainty of sexual development, it did hold out the promise of correcting and even preventing possible mistakes that occurred 'along the way'. Endocrinological research would thus feed into the rising image of a plastic body that could be regulated at will.

As a result of these developments, sexual intermediacy ultimately split into the triad of transsexuality, intersexuality and homosexuality. Judith Halberstam, for instance, maintains that "the history of homosexuality and transsexuality was a shared history at the beginning of the [twentieth] century and only diverged in the 1940s", when the technological means to change sex became publically available (*Masculinity* 85). Homosexuality was increasingly viewed as a psychosexual phenomenon that had little to do with sexological models of inversion, which were seen as anachronistic and offensive. As a result, same-sex desire was supposedly cut-off from cross-gender desire. Taken to its extreme, this split implied that women like Bryher, who desired to be a boy, would now either choose to become a man or to

remain a woman. In both cases, the productive instability of the figure of the boy is lost.

The transsexual subject's demand to change sex surgically and hormonally pointed to a desire to align an inner gender identity with the outer appearance of the sexed body. Sex change technologies held out the promise that it would be possible to efface a former sex, to rewrite history and overcome the 'weight' of the past.² The idealised transgender body "emerged as futurity itself, a kind of heroic fulfilment of postmodern promises of gender flexibility" (Halberstam, *Queer* 18). Given postmodernism's overt rejection of the agential subject, it is surprising to see that a strong humanist undertone creeps into the popular rhetoric of sexual fluidity and ambiguity. The assumedly unlimited plasticity of the sexed body once again promises the leap out of the restrictions of the material and by extension the temporal.

The dream of mastering the flesh through medical technology is nowhere more apparent than in normalising surgeries of atypically sexed children. By the 1960s, it was widely acknowledged that intersex was a human possibility and that sexual dimorphism was a fiction. At the same time, researchers such as John Money at Johns Hopkins University took an interest in intersexuality and developed a medical protocol that included clinical intervention, including the surgical alteration of infantile genitalia and hormone therapy.³ Sexual difference was surgically inscribed on the body while sexual development could be guided through hormonal treatments. While the transgender body offered fluidity and agency, the intersexual body came to be seen as a passive site on which sexual dimorphisms were reinforced. What connects the idealised images of the transsexual and intersexual body is an assumed physical plasticity that offers freedom from temporal restraints.

While discourses of homosexuality, transsexuality and intersexuality continued to be concerned with many of the problems I have discussed in my thesis,

² Prosser provides an insightful critical discussion of the celebration of the transsexual body as the "hero" of a "new virtual age" (*Skins* 90; especially 90-96)

³ As part of the recent intersex movement, clinical intervention in the treatment of intersex has been subjected to extensive criticism. More recently, the term 'intersex' has been displaced by 'DSD' (disorders of sex development). The new terminology is meant to put more emphasis on non-invasive patient-centred and family-centred treatment protocols. It also implies a move away from intersex as identity politics and towards intersex as physical condition that does not always require medical intervention. Spurgas provides a useful overview over these debates (especially 101-104).

the specific cultural moment I have described comes to an end in the 1930s. German sexology practically ended with the destruction of Hirschfeld's institute by the Nazis in the early 1930s. The impact of English sexology also waned, as the focus of sex research shifted to the US, where researchers like Kinsey examined sexual instinct while the Johns Hopkins team investigated intersexuality (H. Bauer 145). At the same time as sexual intermediacy splintered into specific and isolated fields of research and identity categories, the close connection between literary culture and sexological research of the early twentieth century breaks down.

The set of literary and cultural movements that is often subsumed under the umbrella term postmodernism also began to pose a different set of challenges regarding the treatment of time. While temporality is arguably one of the main concerns of the different postmodern projects, the focus tends to lie on the radical breakdown of temporal order rather than a critical engagement with the different hegemonic time lines I have discussed in my thesis. The Derridean supplement, for instance, serves to confuse constructions of past and present to such a degree that any attempt to speak meaningfully about origins or the relation between past and present becomes problematic. At the same time, his image of the future as the “monstrous *arrivant* ... that which is absolutely foreign or strange” destroys the anticipatory horizon that still serves to structure many of the articulations of sexual intermediacy discussed in my thesis (*Interview* 387; his emphasis). If postmodern time is infinitely more complex than the hegemonic temporalities I have discussed, it is arguably also more limiting, as it tends to gloss over the different ways in which temporal order continues to structure sexual experience.

For these reasons, my thesis does not reach beyond the 1930s. This is not to say, however, that my own approach is not influenced by the postmodern debates I have outlined above. As I have shown in my introduction, my project arises not only from an interest in the past, but also builds on recent work on straight and queer temporalities that seeks to find new means of thinking about sexuality and temporality in tandem. If sexual intermediacy is anachronistic in that it resists a present-day framework, it is all the more timely, as it allows us to understand the restraints of the present.

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